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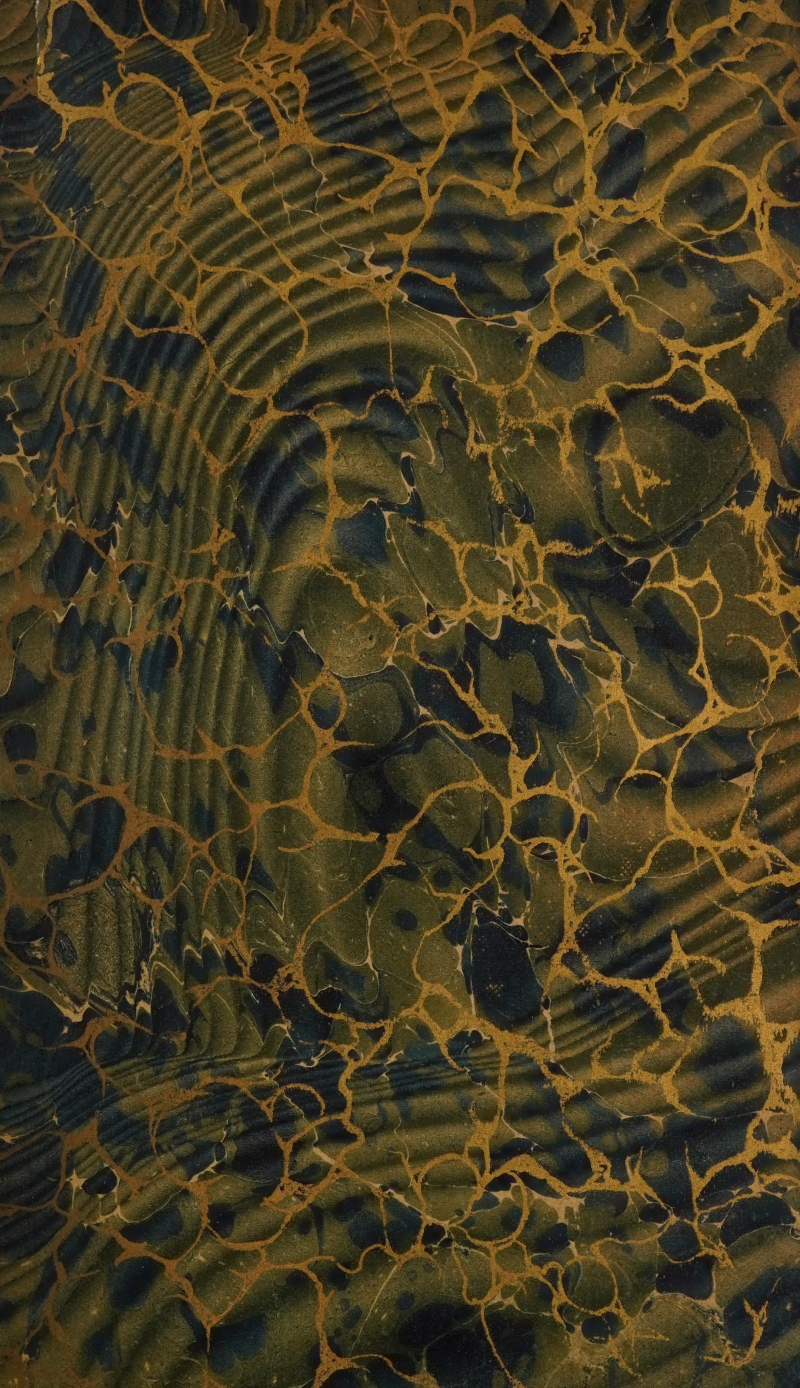

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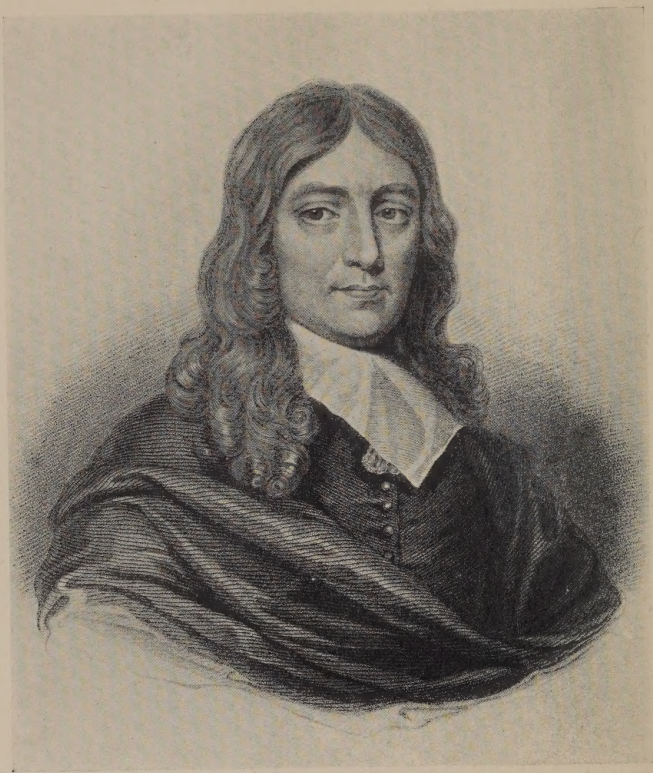

AFTER A MINIATURE BY FAITHORNE

JOHN MILTON

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A HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY
W. ROBERTSON NICOLL
AND
THOMAS SECCOMBE

COWLEY TO BURNS
(1618) (1759)

VOLUME II

NEW YORK
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A HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

CHAPTER VI

TRANSITIONAL POETS

"Who now reads Cowley? If he pleases yet
His moral pleases, not his pointed wit,
Forgot his epic, nay Pindaric art!
But still I love the language of his heart."

—*Pope.*

Cowley—Waller—Marvell—Rochester, Sedley, and Dorset—
The Westminster wits—Charles Cotton

An interesting but belated and long-neglected group of transitional poets is formed by the philosophical lyrists who flourished at the close of the Commonwealth and may be described collectively as disciples or rivals either of Donne and Cowley or Carew and Waller. This last cluster put forth by the dying Renaissance in England may be extended to include not only Cowley, Joseph Beaumont, Henry More, William Chamberlayne, Thomas Flatman, Thomas Stanley, and "the matchless Orinda," but also Waller, Davenant, Denham, Cleveland, and, for convenience' sake, Andrew Marvell, and one or two of the minor lyrists of the Restoration.

Abraham Cowley, the most popular English poet of his time, was born in Fleet Street, near Chancery Lane, in 1618, and was the posthumous son of a respectable stationer (and grocer). His precocity was exceptional, and he may be truly said to have lisped in numbers. In his twelfth year he composed a short epical romance, while in his fifteenth he brought out his *Poetical Blossomes* (1633). A study of *The Faerie Queene* confirmed his resolution to become a poet, and when he proceeded from Westminster

to Trinity at Cambridge in 1637 his poetic fame had preceded him. He was already a fellow of his college in 1641 when he produced his comedy of *The Guardian,* subsequently metamorphosed and greatly improved under a more familiar name, *The Cutter of Coleman Street.* Three years later a satire on the Puritans compelled his withdrawal to Oxford, whence Cowley followed the Queen to France (and so met and befriended Crashaw) as secretary and diplomatic agent. He conducted private correspondence in cipher and made some dangerous journeys on the King's behalf to the Low Countries, Jersey, Scotland, and elsewhere. He had written little since his popular collection of amorous poems known as *The Mistress* appeared at London in 1647. In 1656 he was discovered in London and was for a short time imprisoned; but in the same year he found means to issue a folio collection of his poems including his sacred epic in four books, the *Davideis,* and his two celebrated Pindaric Odes. He received in 1657 the degree of M.D. at Oxford, and published his Latin poem, *Plantarum,* on the properties of simples. As a Latin poet Dr. Johnson, himself one of the best practical Latinists England can boast, held that Cowley was superior to Milton, though he held Thomas May to be better that either. Upon Cromwell's death Cowley paid a long visit to Paris. At the Restoration, when men who had fought for Cromwell were rewarded for coming over to Charles II., Cowley was denied the Mastership of the Savoy on pretence of "disloyalty," and the Lord Chancellor told him that his pardon was his reward. He was, however, allowed to resume his fellowship. The sum of his offence was that he had lived peaceably under the usurping government, though without having published a word to compromise his original principles. Misanthropy as far as so gentle a nature could cherish it naturally strengthened his love of retirement, and increased that passion for

a country life which breathes in the fancy of his poetry and in the eloquence of his prose. By the influence of Buckingham and St. Albans he proved more successful than Sam Butler, and eventually obtained a competence of about £300 a year upon a lease for life of some of the Queen Mother's dower lands. Unrequited love drove him from Battersea to Barnes, and from Barnes Pope would have us believe to the bottle. He caught his death from lying out (with Dean Sprat) after a carouse. He died at the Porch House, Chertsey, on July 28th, 1667 ("Here the last accents flowed from Cowley's tongue," said an inscription over the door), and was buried with solemnity and six horses in Westminster Abbey, Charles II. declaring that "he had not left behind him a better man in England." His Grace the "Duke of Bucks," Aubrey tells us, condescended to hold a tassel of the pall. "Who now reads Cowley?" wrote Pope sixty years after his predecessor's death. Yet for half that period at least he was not only considered absolutely sure of a place among our classic writers (an opinion in which Milton concurred), but was also one of the most popular of poets. He was rightly considered on the whole as a continuator of the tradition of Donne, but of a Donne, it must be admitted, greatly diluted, while at the same time modernised and French polished. Frostwork and silver tinsel replaced the gold of Pindar and the platinum of the incomparable Dean.

So fragmentary has our knowledge of Cowley's work gradually become that it is hard for us to assign importance to his literary influence. Yet all the short pieces of Cowley that are still in the least familiar, such as the airy and fickle *Chronicle,* in which he relates the quick succession of his short loves, *The Grasshopper, The Swallow, The Epicure,* and *Drinking* from the Anacreontics, the humorous paraphrase of *The Town and Country Mouse* from Horace's *Satires,* the delicious fragment, "Love in

her sunny eyes doth basking play," the dignified *Ode to the Royal Society,* and the favourite *A Wish,* first printed in *Poetical Blossomes* (which subsequently inspired Pomfret's *Choice,* a poem described by Southey as the most popular in the language)—all these bear ample testimony to Cowley's ingenuity, taste, and scholarship. And there is one point at least at which Cowley may be regarded as an innovator. The Pindaric Odes which he professed to imitate from Pindar were probably adopted by him for the exceptional scope which they gave to his fertility in invention, classical imagery, and ingenious figures. Cowley was thus responsible for naturalising in England [1] a somewhat

[1] Of the other so-called metaphysical poets of Cowley's day we need do little more than mention Henry More and William Chamberlayne. More's philosophical poems containing his *Platonic Song of the Soul* in Spenserian stanzas appeared in 1647; it is a serious attempt by a contemplative collegian of unlimited leisure to turn metaphysics into poetry. William Chamberlayne, a physician of Shaftesbury, who fought on the King's side at the second battle of Newbury, and died at his native place, aged seventy, in 1689, produced in 1659 his long romance of *Pharonnida* in five cantos of heroic verse. The story is extremely complicated, having some affinities with *The Winter's Tale* and some with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona,* while at other points it recalls the adventures of Don Juan. But the writer has none of the vigour or the clearness requisite for sustaining the interest of such an intricate narrative. The changes of scene alone between Sicily, Sparta, and Epirus are bewildering in the extreme. The poet studiously avoids adapting the sense to the conformation of the couplet, and thus adds to the rambling effect of a poem which contains detached passages of undoubted beauty. Even longer than the "mammoths" of More and Chamberlayne is the *Psyche,* an allegorical description in twenty cantos of *The Intercourse between Christ and the Soul* (1648) of Dr. Joseph Beaumont, a distant relative of the dramatist, and a close friend at Cambridge of Crashaw. This colossal work in six-line stanzas (of the type favoured by Brooke in his terrible treatises on Monarchy and Humane Learning) forms a kind of link be-

frigid and unsatisfying metrical form, and one extremely hard to reconcile with the genius of the language. The irregularity of the odes was embraced for different reasons by Dryden and Gray, but its existence was not perhaps fully justified until a good deal later in the hands of Keats, Shelley, and Arnold.

Edmund Waller was born on March 3rd, 1606, at the manor house of Coleshill, a pretty little hamlet two miles from Amersham. His father was an esquire of good family and his mother was John Hampden's aunt. He entered Lincoln's Inn in 1622 after education at Eton and King's, and went into Parliament before he was twenty. In 1631 he made a rich city match, in 1634 his wife died, and Waller, after a year's interval, during which he frequented the society of literary men and acquired literary aspirations, became a suitor to the Lady Dorothea Sidney of Penshurst, whom he eternised in his poems as Sacharissa.

tween the metaphysical and ecstatic school of religious poetry and the long set pieces of eighteenth-century didacticism. Pope ascribes to it a great many flowers well worth gathering; "the man who has the art of stealing wisely will find his account on reading it." A more direct disciple of Cowley was Thomas Flatman, of Winchester and New College, a skilful painter of miniatures by profession, though he had been called to the Bar by the Inner Temple. He was a virtuoso in "numbers" and diligently imitated the Pindaric Odes of Cowley, writing similar effusions on "the matchless Orinda," on Monk, on Rupert, and on Charles II. His meditations upon Death led to stronger and more original verses; his songs are irregular, and some of the best, such as his *Advice to an Old Man about to Marry*, exceedingly free. Flatman's flatteries have scarcely succeeded in retrieving "the matchless Orinda" from oblivion. Her poems, commenced in 1651, made up but a slender bundle when collected in 1667, three years after the fair Katherine's death. Of this tear-bottle sentimentalist and Della Cruscan it is safe to say that she would have been long forgotten, but for her melodious name, not Philips, but "the matchless Orinda."

His poems to Sacharissa, however, though occasionally pretty, are singularly unemotional, and when she married the Earl of Sunderland a few years later the grief of Waller appears to have been anything but poignant. As cousin of John Hampden and a connection by marriage of Cromwell, Waller had some leanings towards the popular side, but he was at heart a courtier and a conservative; he looked upon things with a carnal eye and only wanted to be left to enjoy his wealth and popularity in peace. But like Sir William Temple he was vain, and he wanted to shine as an orator in the new parliamentary arena.[1] He was veering more and more towards the Royalist side when in February, 1643, he went as a commissioner to treat with the King at Oxford. There in all probability was conceived the plot, afterwards known as Waller's, to secure the City of London for the King. The plot was revealed by a clerk whom the Earl of Manchester had bribed, and in the hope of saving his life Waller disclosed all that he knew about the design. Several of his accomplices were hanged, but Waller himself escaped with the sentence of banishment

[1] He was esteemed as a wit and a "privy mocker." He said he wished he had written the Duchess of Newcastle's verses on the death of a stag: charged with adulation, he explained that nothing was too much to be given that a lady might be saved from the disgrace of such a vile performance. For the Lives of Cowley and Waller, the prime authorities are Wood, Aubrey, Clarendon, and the Diaries of Evelyn and Pepys, and then the two excellent Lives by Dr. Johnson, *Lives of the Poets* (Clarendon Press, 1905, vol. i.*). Both Waller and Marvell are well edited in the Muses' Library, and there is a recent Life of Marvell by Augustine Birrell (in the English Men of Letters). A complete Marvell (ed. Grosart) fills 4 vols. in Fuller's *Worthies* Library, 1872. For all three see *Dictionary of National Biography.* There is a good dialogue in Landor, in which Marvell dilates both on Milton and Cromwell. Of Cowley there is an edition in the recent Cambridge English Classics; ed. Waller (1904-5; *Selections*, 1902).

and a fine of £10,000. He spent most of his exile in Paris, where he saw much of Evelyn and Hobbes, and had more money to dispense than most of the refugees. He and Evelyn parted in Paris in 1652, and Waller returned home. In 1655 he was made a commissioner of trade and produced an elaborate *Panegyric to my Lord Protector.*

The bold Imperial note which Waller strikes in these verses is repeated more than once, notably in his heroics *Of a War with Spain* and *A Fight at Sea.* In other respects they do little enough to confirm his claim, which barely needs support, to be a powerful innovator and great master of technique in English verse. Posterity, in fact, owes its debt to Edmund Waller, not for his couplets, finely as he wrote these upon one occasion at least, in his swan song, *Of the Last Verses of the Book,* but for his occasional lyrics; no one could improve a trivial occasion much more gracefully than Waller—witness his lines *On a Girdle,* concluding:

> Give me but what this riband bound,
> Take all the rest the sun goes round,

and his still more famous *Go, Lovely Rose.* The fragrance of this is indeed exquisite, but the idea is of immemorial antiquity, and has been worked and reworked. The finest image in Waller is that perhaps in his lines *To a Lady*:

> The eagle's fate and mine are one,
> Which on the shaft that made him die
> Espied a feather of his own
> Wherewith he wont to soar so high.

As "the greatest refiner of our English language in poetry," he was held after Cowley's death to dominate the world of wit. In reality he was just as much of a wit as other minor Caroline lyrists, like whom he has left two or three copies of verses, and no more, which

posterity will not willingly let die. The difference between him and Lovelace or Suckling amounts to just this, that there is less distance between his polished verse that no one now reads, and the few "lucky trifles" that all the world knows. Few poets so essentially superficial have received such an ample recognition from their contemporaries. He died at Hall Barn, Beaconsfield, on October 21st, 1687, and was buried under a pyramidal monument still shaded by a very fine walnut-tree in the churchyard there.[1]

Waller's poetical ideal was applause, and he deliberately studied to be correct, modern, and smooth. But the notion that he first successfully trimmed the balance of our heroic couplet is quite preposterous. Thomas Lodge, Marlowe, Drayton, Fairfax (to whom Waller admits a debt), George Sandys, Carew and others, not to mention Shakespeare, had exhibited a mastery over the heroic couplet to which the slower endowment of Waller could never have approximated. Carew, had he lived, would have probably given our poetry an even stronger bias in the same direction. The result of the tendency was first made decidedly manifest after the return of our exiles from France in 1660. Hence a not unnatural inclination to attribute it too exclusively to Cowley and Waller. The growth of poetic diction (so-called), of balanced epithets and a mannered inversion, the further definition of the pause at the end of the line, and the increasing fixity of the rule to complete the sense at the conclusion of the couplet—all this was well adapted to the growing demand of the age for verse satire, through which the old heroic measure was merged by imperceptible degrees into the finished clockwork couplet of the school of Pope.

The number of Waller's imitators and copyists was

[1] The walnut, as a recognisance, was an armorial pun; the name being pronounced Waw-ler.

legion.[1] Foremost among them stands Sir John Denham (d. 1669, *æt.* 54), the son of an Irish judge, and a long-suffering Royalist, who published his famous descriptive poem, *Cooper's Hill,* as early as 1641, four years before the first collective edition of Waller's poems appeared. But for all that, Denham was as much a deliberate imitator of Waller, and especially Waller's smoothness of versification, as Mason subsequently was of Gray. It was not until Denham's poems were published in 1655 that the four famous lines were added:

> O, could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
> My great example, as it is my theme!
> Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,
> Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.

Nothing else in the poems, it must be owned, comes up to this fine rhetorical invocation. Johnson describes it as our first topographical poem of importance, strangely overlooking not only Jonson's *Penshurst,* but also Drayton's mammoth *Polyolbion.* Denham's verse is consistently sleek, but he wrote nothing else of interest with the exception of his threnody on Cowley.

Andrew Marvell forms an interesting link between the classical culture of the concettists, the Puritan enthusiasm

[1] Thomas Stanley (d. 1678), a considerable translator, and a patron of still smaller poetical fry, such as Sherburne and Hammond, a close imitator of Waller, exhibited, in his *Original Poems* of 1651 (reprinted by Brydges 1814), verses of great smoothness and no little variety of metre. But they are occasional poems without an occasion upon themes hopelessly worn and conventional. Another poet and essayist upon the fringe of literature at this time was John Hall (1627—1656), of Durham and St. John's, Cambridge; a friend of Hartlib and of Hobbes, who published his *Horæ Vacivæ* or Essays in 1646, and his *Poems* in 1647. Sir Francis Kinaston (1587—1642) shows similar tendencies, as a kind of glorified court-usher of poetry, as Leigh Hunt heartlessly described Waller.

of Milton, and the satirical energy of Dryden. Marvell was born at Winestead-in-Holdernesse on March 31, 1621, and in 1633 gained an exhibition at the Hull Grammar School, and went as a sizar to Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1646 he returned to England after a long sojourn on the Continent; three years later he addressed some verses to his noble friend, Richard Lovelace; while in the following year (1650), in a fine Horatian *Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland,* he wrote those touching lines upon Charles's execution which so well sum up the feeling of a scholar and a gentleman, without reference to the particular creed in politics which he might feel called upon to adopt:

He nothing common did, or mean,
Upon that memorable scene;
But with his keener eye
The axe's edge did try;

Nor called the gods with vulgar spite
To vindicate his helpless right,
But bowed his comely head
Down, as upon a bed.

At the close of 1650 he went to Nunappleton in Yorkshire as tutor to Lord Fairfax's daughter May. And there, during two happy years, he wrote his longest poem in octosyllabic verse upon Appleton House, and many of his most beautiful pastoral and amorous verses. In the Fairfax garden-croft his muse seemed to bud and blossom like a spring cherry:

What wond'rous life is this I lead!
Ripe apples drop about my head . . .
The nectarine and curious peach
Into my hands themselves do reach. . . .
Bind me, ye woodbines, in your twines
Curb me about, ye gadding vines,
And oh, so close your circles lace
That I may never leave this place!

In 1653 he returned to London and became a familiar figure at Milton's house in Petty France, and in 1657 he became Milton's colleague in the Latin secretaryship. Next year he wrote his poem on the death of Cromwell, the sincerity of which shines in comparison with the specious eulogies of Dryden and Waller. From 1659 onwards he sat as representative of Hull in Parliament, receiving the still customary payment of six and eightpence per day while Parliament sat. As a member of the House he may have been able to do something to ensure Milton's safety in 1660. By 1667, when he wrote the first of his national satires called *Instructions to a Painter* after the models of Waller and Denham, Marvell had definitely joined the ranks of the opposition. Most of these denunciating satires are of ephemeral interest (except, indeed, to the historian), though they caused Marvell to be regarded by the Tory and High Church party as a very pestilent and dangerous wit who ought to be severely repressed. Marvell died in London on August 16th, 1678, and was buried in St. Gile's-in-the-Fields. His early and non-political poems, written far away from the town and its corruptions, are the most valuable part of his literary legacy. His knowledge of the classics taught him form, while he had much of the grace of Herrick with infinitely more feeling. His country poems—*The Nymph and the Fawn, The Songs of the Mower, The Garden, A Drop of Dew*—are melodious and witty; full, as Charles Lamb said, of a witty delicacy. Their conceits, in fact, serve as real adornments, for under the surface of their quaintness there is a deeper meaning.

In the whole compass of our poetry there is nothing quite like the love of gardens, woods, meads, rivers, and birds in Marvell's best octosyllabics, which had a potent influence upon the rhythm of not a few occasional poets in the same *genre*—above all, upon Charles Lamb. He himself owed

to Fletcher, Milton, Herrick, Wither, and Randolph, yet who of these could have written:

> Through the hazels thick espy
> The hatching throstle's shining eye?

Such observation was rare among the poets. Though unequal, Marvell is far less so than those typical court poets, Carew, Suckling, and Lovelace. Besides the poems mentioned, his *Coronet,* in which he approaches Crashaw, *Young Love, On Paradise Lost,* and the exquisite *Where the Remote Bermudas Ride*—all are regarded with true affection by lovers of poetry.

As a satirist Marvell is brought into the somewhat shady companionship of John Oldham, a native of Tetbury, and a graduate of Oxford (St. Edmund Hall). Oldham became an usher at Croydon where Rochester and Sedley are said to have visited him, struck perhaps by the regular thwick-thwack of his satirical heroics. He wrote passable imitations of Horace, Juvenal, and Boileau; but his reputation belongs to the episode of the Popish Plot, when his precious couplets against the Jesuits, in describing the sham relics of Rome, are outrageous enough to have been penned by Oates himself. In their uncompromising savagery we recognise a literary progenitor of Charles Churchhill. Pope's opinion is worth hearing on the minor Restoration arts and versifiers: "Oldham is a very indelicate writer: he has strong rage but is too much like Billingsgate. Lord Rochester had much more delicacy and more knowledge of mankind." "Rochester," he added, "is the medium between the rough coarseness of Oldham and the delicate exactness of Lord Dorset. Sedley is a very insipid writer: except in some few of his little love verses." This deprecation of Sedley seems beyond the mark when we consider songs such as "Love still has something of the sea," or the more famous:

Phillis is my only joy,
Faithless as the winds or seas;
Sometimes coming, sometimes coy,
Yet she never fails to please.

But for this we are willing enough to accept Pope's order of merit. It is hard to form a satisfactory estimate of Rochester for the simple reason that many of his cleverest verses are simply unprintable, and this difficulty is complicated by the fact that it is almost impossible to identify Rochester's work, if it may so be described, from that of his collaborators, rivals, or imitators. Born at Ditchley, Rochester graduated M.A. from Wadham when he was thirteen, and set out upon a tour of foreign courts, during which he studied Alcibiades, Boileau, and Cowley as models. At seventeen he appeared at Charles II.'s court a good-looking, slender boy, precociously sprightly and amusing when sober, and extravagantly comical when drunk. His life at the court was a succession of practical jokes, of which the victims varied from the King himself to the harmless city merchant, but Charles could forgive anything rather than spare such an idle rogue from his society. In his last years promiscuous debauchery seems to have given way to habitual intoxication, and Rochester in his penitent state confessed to Burnet that he had been drunk for five years. On his deathbed he ordered his licentious poems to be destroyed, but this naturally was not done, and Rochester is still saddled with many obscenities which he can never have perpetrated. His verses are always described as lewd and profane; but we know of them little more than "Nothing." He died an enfeebled old wreck of thirty-three on July 26, 1680.[1]

[1] There is a good deal of libertine verse, some of it, no doubt, by Rochester, in the collection known as *Poems on Affairs of State.* See also Bullen's *Musa Proterva, Rochester and the Rakes,* Rutherford's *Singular Life of the Renowned Earl,*

Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset, was a more amiable rake than Rochester. Walpole confirms Pope's view that he was the finest gentleman at the voluptuous court of Charles II., and that he had as much wit as either the King, Buckingham, or Rochester, without the want of feeling of Charles, the want of principle of the Duke, of the "thoughtlessness" (charming euphemism) of the third. He was undoubtedly a munificent patron to Dryden and Prior, and apart from his gay poems to the royal mistresses, for whom he had a particular *tendre,* he wrote at least one masterpiece which far surpasses anything of Rochester's, his *Song written at Sea in the First Dutch War the Night before the Engagement:*

> To all you ladies now on land
> We men at sea indite:
> But first would have you understand
> How hard it is to write.

But each one of the eleven stanzas of this sprightly gaiety is a gem. Dorset is also responsible for the happy literary application of the Shakespearean phrase "alacrity in sinking." "Gay, vigorous, and airy" Dorset grew fat, and according to Swift dull, when he reached sixty. He died at Bath on January 29, 1706. Sedley and Dorset passed on the *tibia* to Prior, who were the last to sound it for well-nigh a hundred years.[1]

Aubrey, Dr. Johnson, and the excellent memoir in the *Dictionary of National Biography.* A pretty selection of *Lyrists of the Restoration* has appeared in the Chap-books (ed. Masefield, 1905).

[1] Westminster School, under James I. and Charles I., must have been a veritable nest of singing birds, with every variety of note and utterance. In addition to three poets who achieved so much as George Herbert, Herrick, and Cowley, the school was the cradle of two singers of such promise as Cartwright and Randolph, and of a great host of minor versifiers such as

William Strode (1602—1645), author of *The Floating Island*, and of a pretty kissing song; Henry King (d. 1669), Bishop of Chichester, author of devotional poems not without merit; Jasper Mayne (d. 1672), a priestly playwright of no scruples worth speaking of, and an adept translator of Lucian; Nicholas Hookes (d. 1712), author of *Amanda;* and several others. William Cartwright, a young person of the humblest origin, passed from Westminster to Christ Church an accepted paragon and particular wit, and his early death, it was said of camp fever, in 1643, was felt as a blow by many, even in that short-lived generation. Among his *Poems and Plays* collected in 1651 we find nothing save an indifferent play called *The Ordinary*, nor can we expect his *Poemata Græca et Latina* to supply the key to this riddle of his fame. Even younger was nipped Thomas Randolph (1605—1635), who went from the school to Trinity, Cambridge. Inspired by a furtive glimpse of Jonson in the Devil Tavern, he drank too greedily, we are told, of the Muses' Spring. So may it be. His plays are in the dust with Davenant's, Nabbes's, and Brome's, but there are some pastoral blossoms among his heroic and other verses, and one phrase, "blithe, buxom, and debonair," which Milton himself condescended to improve.

Charles Cotton (d. 1687), the unsurpassed translator of Montaigne, left a few copies of verse not on any account to be forgotten. Angler ("a dog at a catch"), wit, traveller, and toss-pot, he was a benefactor of poor bards, such as Lovelace, and a bright exemplar of all-around talent. His *Poems on Several Occasions* (1689) contain *Winter* ("Hark! Hark! I hear the north wind roar") and the sunny *Retirement.* Honest, hearty Mr. Cotton has always been a favourite—Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Lamb unite in calling Cotton "a first-rate." Charles Cotton's *Voyage to Ireland in Burlesque* (1671), which has been claimed as anticipating the *Bath Guide* of Anstey, owed something, no doubt, to the facetious rhyming *Journal* (1638) of "Drunken Barnabee" or Richard Brathwait (d. May 4th, 1673, *æt.*, 85), and to the more sprightly humours of Bishop Corbet's *Iter Boreale.*

CHAPTER VII

FROM THIS WORLD TO THE NEXT: JOHN BUNYAN

"A curious writer is Bunyan. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a nursery tale, a blood-curdling allegory, showing the terrible inner mind of one of those fanatics; groans, invasions of the spirit, the belief in damnation, visions of the devil's scruples. Oh! Pray do not turn us into Protestants; let us remain Voltaireans and Spinozists! After the hallucination is calmed down, a sort of rigidity remains, moral spikes with which to wound oneself continually and stab others."—TAINE, *Letters.*

"The whole allegory is a consistent attack on morality and respectability."—SHAW, *Man and Superman.*

The Pilgrim's Progress and its creator.[1]

IF Milton represented cultivated Puritanism, the everyday faith of the humble Christian in seventeenth-century England, the class who set out to colonise the backwoods of America is represented by John Bunyan, the most popular religious writer that England has ever produced. The greatness of Milton resides largely in the complexity of his endowment and the scholarly elaboration of his talent; that of Bunyan, on the other hand, depends upon the simplicity of his mind and the devotion of his nature to one

[1] The best introduction to *The Pilgrim's Progress* is supplied by its author's own *Grace Abounding.* The best Life of Bunyan is that of Dr. John Brown, and the best cheap modern edition that edited by Prof. C. H. Firth (Methuen, 1898). Among famous illustrators are John Martin and Sir John Gilbert. And in recent literature the reader should not fail to notice the appreciation of Bernard Shaw in the Preface to *Man and Superman* or the respectable solicitor's unbiassed summing-up of Christian's harebrained enterprise in *Henry Brocken.*

single idea. He was a pilgrim in his deeds as well as his words, and his particular other-worldliness exactly appealed to the religious cravings of the English Protestant, who had abandoned the ideas of sacramental grace and purgatory, and wanted something definite in their stead. Two generations had elapsed since the Reformation had formally taken place, and the current of time had brought a generation of Englishmen far more religious than our country had seen for at least four hundred years. But these men were religious in a narrow, exclusive, and intensely individual way. Their historical philosophy was based on two books, the Bible and Foxe, of the literal veracity of which they were implicitly assured. In all these men, represented by such types as Bunyan, Peters, Roger Williams, Winthrop, Baxter, and many others, the fear of God was developed to an extent of which the phrase as used at the present day and fatigued by centuries of unmeaning use can give not the very slightest conception. How to escape the ban of sin, how to flee from the wrath to come, if the sacraments were no good—this was the prime concern of every one of them. The method by which this can be done was shown by Bunyan in his all-famous allegory. He knew by bitter experience. And the conviction of sin and the cruel weight of the Burden, the agonising query, What shall I do to be saved? the revelation of the wicket-gate of conversion by which the narrow way alone may be entered, the deliverance from the load of sin through the agency of the Cross—these personal phases of suffering and delivery explain the various steps by which the sinner may come to benefit by the atonement.

John Bunyan was born at Elstow, a village near Bedford, where his father mended pots and kettles, in 1628. He learned the elements at Bedford Grammar School; and before he was seventeen was drafted into the Parliamentary army, and served for a year or so under Sir

Samuel Luke, who was Cromwell's scout-master for the county of Bedford; but he makes no reference whatever to his own military exploits, the recollection of which can hardly have been congenial to him. In 1647 he returned to his tinker's work at Elstow much as he had left it. "Two years later," he says, "I lighted on a wife whose father was counted godly. We came together as poor as might be, not having so much household stuff as a dish or a spoon between us. But she had for her portion two books, *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practise of Piety,* which her father had left her when he died. In these two books I sometimes read with her." On his marriage he became regular and respectable in his habits. "I fell in," he says, "with the religion of the times—to go to church twice a day, very devoutly to say and sing as the others did, yet retaining my wicked life." By this wicked life he means not so much the lying and swearing at which he professes that he excelled as a boy, but merely an indulgence in amusements and Sunday sports, and an indifference to the Bible and to the mysteries of religion. But his conscience was from the first extraordinarily sensitive, and even as a boy he was haunted by visions of hell, by spectres, hobgoblins, and dreams.

The next years of Bunyan's life are in the account he has given us of his own struggles in the book called *Grace Abounding,* a history of his own panic fear of the wrath to come. He went about with the book in his hand, saying to himself, "What shall I do to be saved?" Of his material progress during the Commonwealth he tells us practically nothing, though it is clear that he must have been a successful trader, in the same fraternity as Izaak Walton, and for aught we know he may have been as shrewd a dealer in his way as either Franklin or Cobbett. But what is certain is that Bunyan regarded all such matters as wholly unimportant as compared with the salvation

of his soul. He heard voices saying continually unto him, "Sell Christ for this or that." He tortured himself into the belief that he had committed the unpardonable sin, the sin of Judas, and he was for a long time in the pitiable condition of the Welsh minister so powerfully described by Borrow in *Lavengro*. Giant Despair had blinded the unhappy man, and he was for a long time groping among the tombs. Deliverance came appropriately in the form of an illusion—the hobgoblins and devils that had tormented him being replaced by voices from heaven. Conversion was followed by baptism in the Ouse, by admission to the Baptist community, by an illness, and by a calm. In 1655 he was called upon to take part in the "ministry." He was modest, humble, shrinking. The minister when he preached was, according to the theory, an instrument uttering the words not of himself but of the Holy Spirit. A man like Bunyan, who really believed this, might well be alarmed. After earnest entreaty, however, he made "experiment of his powers" in private, and it was at once evident that, with the thing which these people meant by inspiration, he was abundantly supplied. No such preacher to the uneducated English masses was to be found within the four seas. He was a man of natural genius, who believed the Protestant form of Christianity to be completely true. He knew nothing of philosophy, nothing of history, nothing of literature. But his humour, his modesty, and his real greatness as a preacher are shown alike in the well-known story of his descent from the pulpit after a great effort. "Oh, master Bunyan," said a grateful elder in his congregation, "that was a sweet sermon." "You need not tell me that," said Bunyan, "the Devil whispered it to me before I was well out of the pulpit."

After the Restoration, the Anglican clergy, who had been as "partridges on the mountains," returned to their pulpits, and it became the turn of the conventicles to undergo

persecution. The Act of Conformity made no distinction between aggressive and unaggressive sects such as the Baptists; and the magistrates at Bedford were compelled, however reluctantly, to arrest and imprison Bunyan as an unlicensed preacher. There seems to have been no kind of animus against him, and he could have got out of prison at any time by giving an undertaking not to preach in public. But this stipulation he found it out of his power to make, and the result was that he remained on in the county gaol from 1660 to 1672. Bunyan's detention for such a long period was evidently of an irregular kind. Such irregularities were common enough before the passing of the Habeas Corpus Act in 1679. It is probable that he was treated on the whole in a very lenient manner. In the first year of his imprisonment he is known to have made a visit to London. He was allowed to receive the visits of his friends, to receive comforts from without, and to exhort his fellow-sufferers in the gaol, where he helped to support himself by making tag-laces. His four young children were looked after by the devoted woman whom he had married in 1659, within a year of the great loss sustained by the death of the wife of his youth. There is little doubt that the confinement of gaol considerably stimulated his powers of composition; his library there was select, consisting of the Bible and *The Book of Martyrs.* The first of his prison books, as they are called, was a verse dialogue called *Profitable Meditations,* printed in 1661; *The Holy City,* an expansion of a prison sermon, followed in 1665; and his famous autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, or A Brief and Faithful Relation of the Exceeding Mercy of God in Christ to his Poor Servant John Bunyan,* in eight sheets, 12mo, 1666. In the early summer of 1627 his release was procured under the Act of Indulgence, and he began preaching regularly in a barn in an orchard which stood between Castle and Mill Lane.

But in 1675 his licence as a preacher was revoked, and Bunyan, once more informed against, was sent this time to the town prison or "den" on Bedford Bridge, which had recently been repaired after the damage sustained by the floods in 1671, and which was finally taken down in 1765. Here he wrote the first part of *Pilgrim's Progress* down to the parting of Christian and Hopeful with the shepherds on the Delectable Mountains, which Bunyan concludes with the words, "So I awoke from my dream." Bunyan was forty-seven at the time. He was writing, as usual, strictly to improve the occasion, and fell into the allegory unawares. His final imprisonment seems to have lasted only until the early months of 1676, and in 1677 Bunyan took the completed allegory (which had ended by wholly devouring the discourse) to London for publication, and it was published at 1*s.* 6*d.* in March, 1678. Some characteristic additions were made in the second edition of 1679, in which Mr. Worldly Wiseman appeared for the first time. The second part did not appear until January, 1685. The realistic *Life and Death of Mr. Badman* was presented to the world in 1680 in the form of a dialogue between Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Attentive, after the manner of Dent's *Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven.* It is the story of a predestinate rascal with a moral intention at least as clear as that in Hogarth's "Idle Apprentice," but its general plausibility is much stronger, and it has much of the realistic power of Defoe.

The next two years were occupied by Bunyan in writing his second great allegory, *The Holy War,* which was published in 1682. The story of his remaining years is briefly told. He lived at a small house in St. Cuthbert's parish, Bedford, in easy circumstances, greatly respected by all the Dissenters of the neighbourhood. His fame as a preacher and as author of *The Pilgrim's Progress* spread abroad. Annually he visited London to preach to the Baptist

churches in Pinner's Hall. It was on one of his visits to London, while staying at the house of John Strudwick on Snow Hill, that he was seized with a fever, and died on Friday, August 31st, 1688. On the following Monday he was buried in Strudwick's vault in Bunhill Fields, where a monument was placed over his tomb in 1861.

In the tribe of literature to which it belongs—that of the allegory or drawn-out fable—*Pilgrim's Progress* stands first. It has no rival either in success or popularity: witness the eighty translations which it has undergone in the various languages and dialects of the human speech. Satire in the guise of travel, inculcation of moral truth in allegorical form, had been attempted frequently in the world of letters from Lucian to Spenser; but such models had no existence as far as John Bunyan was concerned. The Bible was to him not only his book; it was his library as much as was the Koran to the most bigoted of Mohammedans.

What distinguishes *The Pilgrim's Progress* from all other allegories is the fact that the outward story and the inward experience which it portrays are absolutely one. The child can read it with delight for the story alone, the mature reader can cross the line as often as he likes between the fable and the moral. The application is so direct that he can never be at a loss as to the bearing of an incident; at every turn he can recognise familiar footprints. The carnal man and the Christian believer are equally fascinated by the dogged valour of the Puritan sergeant, a reminiscence, it may be, of 1645.

There is no subtlety, no ambiguity about the moral, the clearness and directness of which are as unmistakable as that of the narrative in *Robinson Crusoe*. From this unity and perspicuity in Bunyan's work comes the unique result that he made the abstract as palatable as the concrete. The mould of style into which the allegory is thrown is one as

durable as that of our English Bible, and one even more impervious to time, for after the lapse of two hundred years there are practically no obsolete words in Bunyan. The characters in that company of his, so like and so unlike Chaucer's, were evidently drawn from life,—eternal figures in the human comedy. His *Progress* is a perfect reflection of the Scripture with none of the rubbish of the theologians mixed up with it.

CHAPTER VIII

ENGLAND'S SECOND POET: "SHAKESPEARE FIRST, AND NEXT—MILTON

"This man cuts us all out and the ancients too."—DRYDEN.

"The natural expression of a soul exquisitely nourished upon the best thoughts and finest words of all ages. . . . An appreciation of Milton is the last reward of consummated scholarship."—MARK PATTISON.

"I had thought of the *Lycidas* as of a full-grown beauty—as springing up with all its parts absolute—till, in an evil hour, I was shown the original copy of it, together with the other minor poems of the author in the library of Trinity, kept like some treasure to be proud of. I wish they had thrown them in the Cam, or sent them after the later cantos of Spenser into the Irish Channel. How it staggered me to see the fine things in their ore! interlined, corrected! as if their words were mortal, alterable, displaceable at pleasure! As if they might have been otherwise and just as good! As if inspiration were made up of parts, and these fluctuating, successive, indifferent! I will never go into the workshop of any great artist again."—CHARLES LAMB.

Early life—Italian travel—Pedagogy and prose—Retirement—Chalfont—Completion of *Paradise Lost*—Last Years—Critical estimate—Bibliography.

JOHN MILTON was born over his father's shop in Bread Street, London, on December 9th, 1608. His father, a scrivener, a native of Halton in Oxfordshire, about one year older than Shakespeare, prospered rapidly in London from 1603 onwards at the sign of the Spread Eagle in Bread Street. He married about 1600 and had six children, three of whom, a daughter Anne and two sons, John and Christopher, survived infancy. Anne married Edward Phillips and became the mother of Edward and John

Phillips, the well-known poetasters and scribblers. Christopher, who was born in 1615 and was called to the bar in 1639, adhered as the law taught him, to the King's party. He studied the law, says Johnson, and was a strong Royalist and in James II.'s reign professed Catholicism and was accordingly raised to the judicial bench and knighted, though his legal capacity is said to have been small. The poet's father, apart from possessing the knack of making money, was a man of refinement and cultivation. He was not only a connoisseur of music, but also a composer of some merit. When his elder son was a beautiful boy of ten he had him painted by the Dutch portrait-painter Jansen. "My father," says the poet, "destined me while yet a little child for the study of humane letters. Both at the grammar school and under other masters at home, he caused me to be instructed daily." Among his private tutors was Thomas Young, a well-known Scots Presbyterian divine. Young left England early in 1622 and before that date Milton became a scholar at St. Paul's School under Alexander Gill, successor to the eminent Richard Mulcaster.

Before his school-days were over, he had learnt to read French and Italian and something of Hebrew, in addition to Greek and Latin. In English literature two of his favourite books are known to have been Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas. The influence of Sylvester is apparent in paraphrases of Psalms 114 and 126, written by Milton at the age of fifteen. Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare he doubtless read in first editions, as one poet reads another. His closest friend at school appears to have been Charles Diodati, the son of an Italian doctor who had settled in England. Diodati entered Trinity College, Oxford, in February, 1623, and two years later Milton was admitted at Christ's College, Cambridge. During the first three years of his sojourn at college Milton's severe and ascetic habits seem to have rendered him

somewhat unpopular, and he clearly had a quarrel of some kind with his first tutor, William Chappell. "I am ashamed to relate what I fear is true," writes Johnson, on the authority of Aubrey, "that Milton was one of the last students in either university that suffered the public indignity of corporal correction." There is a tradition that he was called "the lady" in his college, where his rooms are recognised to this day on the first floor of the western staircase on the north side of the great court, and where the mulberry-tree that he planted in the college garden is still pointed out to credulous and incredulous visitors. While at college he corresponded in Latin with Young, Diodati, and the younger Gill. He also wrote academical verses and orations, while among the English verses of this period are the "epitaph" of Shakespeare, the sonnet "On having arrived at the age of twenty-three," the would-be humorous epitaph upon the death of the university carrier, Thomas Hobson, an epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester, and the noble *Ode on the Nativity* of Christmas, 1629. He spoke with great contempt of the academic drama and of the philosophic curriculum of Cambridge. As in the case of Wordsworth, his attitude towards the scheme of university education was almost uniformly critical. When he finally left Cambridge in July, 1632, he was four months short of twenty-four years of age. According to Aubrey, he was a little under the middle height, of fair complexion, with a delicate oval face, dark grey eyes, and light brown hair. His mental and moral attitude at this period is thus summed up by Sir Leslie Stephen:

"Although respected by the authorities, his proud and austere character probably kept him aloof from much of the coarser society of the place. He shared the growing aversion to the scholasticism against which one of his exercises is directed. Like Henry More, who entered Christ's in Milton's last year, he was strongly attracted by

Plato, although he was never so much a philosopher as a poet. He already considered himself as dedicated to the utterance of great thoughts, and to the strictest chastity and self-respect, on the ground that he who would 'write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem.'"

On leaving Cambridge, having taken the degree of M.A. in 1632, Milton went to live again under his father's roof and spent nearly six years at the country residence to which his father had retired to pass his old age, at Horton near Colnbrook, on the old coach road between London and Reading. The first two years and a half of his residence at Horton (1632-4) form the period of the composition of his *Sonnet to the Nightingale,* his *L'Allegro* and *Penseroso,* his *Arcades,* and his *Comus.* At Horton the poet's mother, Sarah Milton, died on April 3rd, 1637. In November of this year he wrote the monody of *Lycidas,* one of the thirty-six pieces—twenty-three in Latin and Greek, thirteen in English—published at Cambridge early in 1638 as *Obsequies to the Memorie of Mr. Edward King,* a wit and scholar who had for eleven years been one of the ornaments of the university.[1]

In the spring of 1638 Milton obtained his father's unwilling consent to a journey on the Continent, though the travelling expenses of the poet and his servant, which the

[1] *Lycidas* is primarily an allegoric pastoral, into the texture of which all that is most beautiful and most significant in pastoral verse seems marvellously condensed; but it contains one passage of stern censure against the unspiritual clergy at the time which is strikingly anticipatory of the later Milton. This intention is clearly marked in the note which he wrote upon the republication of the poem with his full name in 1645: "In this monody the author bewails a learned friend unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish seas, 1637; and by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted clergy."

old man had to defray, must have cost him fully 20 guineas a month. The poet's departure was marked by a letter full of the kindliest advice from the veteran Sir Henry Wotton. In it he referred to the Doric delicacy of Milton's songs and odes, which ravished him beyond anything in our language, sent him a letter of introduction to Lord Scudamore, at Paris, and commended to him as a rule for his demeanour abroad the Italian saw *Pensieri stretti ed il viso sciolto* (Thoughts close, looks loose). At Paris in May he was most courteously received by Lord Scudamore, who introduced him to the learned Hugo Grotius, the greatest of living Dutchmen. He entered Italy at Nice and took shipping thence to Genoa and Leghorn. From Leghorn he proceeded by way of Pisa to Florence, where he stayed until the middle of September. At Florence he was hospitably received by Jacopo Gaddi, Carlo Dati, Agostino Coltellini, and others, and contributed some Latin compositions to the transactions of their private academies. Near Florence, too, at Arcetri, he visited the famous Galileo, "grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licencers thought." From Florence he went by Siena to Rome, where he spent most of October and November. There he was introduced to Lucas Holstenius, secretary to Cardinal Barberini, and one of the librarians of the Vatican. In November he went on to Naples, where Manso, Marquis of Villa, a patron and biographer of Tasso, conferred on him many acts of courtesy.

Milton appears to have been desirous of crossing into Sicily and Greece. "But," he says, "the sad news of civil war coming from England called me back. For I considered it disgraceful that while my fellow-countrymen were fighting at home for liberty, I should be travelling abroad at ease for intellectual purposes." At the close of 1638, therefore, he started back, travelling leisurely by Florence

to Venice, where he shipped for England a number of books collected during his Italian tour. He proceeded by Verona, Milan, and the Pennine Alps to Geneva. There he met Giovanni Diodati and received a confirmation of the sad news of the death of the doctor's nephew, his old schoolfellow. A noble tribute to the one intimate friendship of his youth was the *Epitaphium Damonis*, composed in Latin hexameters shortly after his return. It is modelled on Virgil's bucolic, Milton as the shepherd Thyrsis bewailing the death of his friend. In August, 1639, he crossed the Channel and returned to London, first to a lodging, and then to a pretty garden house in Aldersgate Street, at that time one of the quietest in London, where he took pupils, the first of these being Edward and John Phillips, the fatherless sons of his only sister Anne. He was already meditating a great moral and religious epic, and about 1642 he sketched out an heroic poem on *King Arthur* and a tragedy on *Paradise Lost*. During 1641-2, in five vehement tracts, which fluctuate in style between dignified eloquence and savage invective, he threw himself into the pamphlet war then raging against prelacy. In May, 1643, Milton made an expedition into the heart of the Royalist district of Oxfordshire and returned with a wife, Mary Powell, the daughter of a jovial yeoman and cavalier of Shotover who seems to have owed Milton a considerable sum of money. Very soon after the marriage, Milton began his famous book on divorce; even before this, his bride seems to have found the studious life profoundly uncongenial. She was barely eighteen at the time of the marriage, and after a month of married life she returned to the open-air freedom of her father's house. She had been a Royalist, and, says Aubrey, "two opinions do not well on the same bolster"; she had lived where there was a great deal of company and merriment "environed by the sons of Mars," and when she came to live with her husband

she found it very solitary; no company save that of the pupils whom she often overheard being whipped. This was the end of June, 1643, and in little more than a month from this time appeared Milton's pamphlet on divorce. Milton took exactly the same view of his difficulties as Henry VIII.; he was not responsible in any way for the awkward position in which the "cursed spite" of matrimony had placed him, and from which he loudly demanded that the law should release him. The view that he took—namely, that no obstacle should be put in the way of a husband's obtaining a divorce on the ground of incompatibility of temper—led to the book being proscribed. Milton followed it up with several pamphlets which he issued without licence. Various steps were taken to suppress these pamphlets and a new ordinance passed (1644) to give more stringency to the licencing regulations. Upon this Milton wrote his *Areopagitica,* the most noted of his prose works, in defence of a more extended liberty of the press.

About this time he seems to have had the idea of translating into practice his somewhat oriental precepts on the subject of divorce, and cast his eye on the handsome and witty daughter of a Dr. Davis; she, however, was "averse to this motion." Meanwhile the ruin of the royal cause had brought the Powells into distress, and they wished to restore to Milton his actual wife. She was unexpectedly introduced to him while he was on a visit, and, after begging pardon upon her knees, was somewhat grudgingly received back into favour. Their household was now removed to the Barbican, where there was more room for the now increasing pupils, and there were born Milton's three daughters, Anne, Mary, and Deborah (1646, 1648, 1652), and a son John, who died in infancy. His wife, Mary Milton, died in the summer of 1652. His wife's relatives maintained that Milton behaved harshly to them

after the loss of their property, but this charge is not supported by an impartial consideration of the evidence. The poet's father died in March, 1647, whereupon Milton, who thereby inherited a competence, moved to a small house in High Holborn opening at the back into Lincoln's Inn Fields, and gave up teaching. During the following year he was engaged in compiling his *History of Britain,* and in March, 1649, after his vindication of the right of the people to judge their rulers in his *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates,* he was invited by the Council of State to become their Latin secretary at a salary of 15*s.* 10½*d.* a day. His chief duty was to translate foreign despatches into dignified Latin. He was also the chief intermediary between the Government and the press, and was expected to answer any detractors of the Government who succeeded in making their voices heard. In this capacity he wrote *Eikonoklastes* (in answer to *Eikon Basilike*), and his *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano.*[1] Milton's final contribution to this deplorable controversy, in which he lost both his temper and his eyesight, and in which he destroyed the character of several authors who were really quite free from complicity in the squabble, was the *Pro se Defensio* (August, 1655). Some years before this he had moved from chambers allowed him in Whitehall to a pretty garden house in Petty France, Westminster. His duties and his salary were somewhat restricted in consequence of his blindness, yet he remained in the service of the Council, being assisted from 1657 onwards by the poet Andrew Marvell. After Cromwell's death he inclined towards the old exclusive republican party, and wrote several pamphlets. In the summer of 1660 his hiding-place was

[1] In answer to the *Defensio Regio* of the learned Salmasius. He had to follow this up with the *Defensio Secunda,* full of autobiographical interest, though often descending to scurrilous personal abuse.

discovered, and he was committed to prison for a few months, but released in the course of December, 1660, upon the payment of fees, through the influence of Sir William Davenant, whom he had previously befriended, and a few friends in the House of Commons. He seems to have lost a good sum of money, owing chiefly to the disastrous turn given to his investments by political events; and his income was reduced from between £500 and £600 a year to perhaps a third of that sum. His second wife, Catherine Woodcock, had died in 1658, and he married a third, Elizabeth Minshull, early in 1663.

Soon after his third marriage, Thomas Elwood, the Quaker, was recommended to Milton as a person who, for the advantage of his conversation, would read to him such Latin books as he thought proper. For this purpose Elwood attended him every afternoon except on Sundays, and acquired for his benefit the foreign pronunciation of Latin. "Milton," says Elwood, "perceiving with what earnest desire I pursued learning, gave me not only all the encouragement but all the help he could; for having a curious ear he understood by my tone when I understood what I read and when I did not; and accordingly he would stop me and examine me, and open the most difficult passages to me." By 1664 Milton was settled in his last house in Artillery Walk, leading to Bunhill Fields, and was busied upon his *Paradise Lost*. At this time his house is said to have been the resort of foreigners, his celebrity being more active on the Continent than in England, the English, as Littleton remarks, being apt to see no good in a man whose politics they dislike. We have a picture of Milton at this time, retaining to an unusual extent the figure, the tunable voice, and the fair countenance of his early manhood. A casual glance at his grey eyes was not sufficient to reveal their loss of sight. Until his latest years he habitually wore a sword, and his gait was erect

and manly. One Dr. Wright, a parson of Dorset, describes him sitting in an elbow chair, in a small chamber hung with rusty green, dressed neatly in black, pale but not cadaverous, with chalk stones in his hands. He was wont to say that, were it not for the gout, his blindness would be tolerable. He used also to sit in a coarse grey cloth coat at the door of his house near Bunhill Fields, in warm sunny weather, to enjoy the fresh air, and so, as well as in his room, received the visits of his admirers.[1]

During the Plague year Milton retired to a "pretty box" which Elwood had taken for him at Chalfont St. Giles, in Buckinghamshire. It was there that one day Milton handed to him the complete manuscript of *Paradise Lost*. "Thou hast said much here of Paradise lost," the

[1] "His domestick habits were those of a sober and temperate student. Of wine or of any strong liquors he drank little. In his diet he was rarely influenced by delicacy of choice. He once delighted in walking and using exercise, and appears to have amused himself in botanical pursuits; but after he was confined by age and blindness he had a machine to swing in for the preservation of his health. In summer he then rested in bed from nine to four, in winter to five. If, at these hours, he was not disposed to rise, he had a person by his bedside to read to him. When he first rose he heard a chapter in the Hebrew Bible, and commonly studied till twelve, then dined; afterwards played on the organ or bass-viol, and either sung himself or made his wife sing, who, he said, had a good voice but no ear." It is related that, when educating his nephews, "he had made them songsters, and sing from the time they were with him." No poet, it may be observed, has more frequently or more powerfully commended the charms of music than Milton. He wished, perhaps, to rival, and he has successfully rivalled, the sweetest description of a favourite bard, whom the melting voice appears to have often enchanted—the tender Petrarch. After his regular indulgence in musical relaxation he studied till six, then entertained his visitors till eight; then enjoyed a light supper, and after a pipe of tobacco and a glass of water retired to bed.

Quaker observed; "but what hast thou to say of Paradise found?"

Paradise Lost, a poem written in ten books by John Milton, was published in 1667. The first edition was sold out in the course of eighteen months, whereupon Milton received the sum of £10. Three thousand copies were disposed of in the course of a little over ten years. In 1680 Milton's widow sold her contingent rights for £8. Milton's *History of Britain* was published in 1670; and *Paradise Regained,* a poem in four books, to which is added *Samson Agonistes,* appeared in 1671. He could not bear, Elwood tells us, to hear *Paradise Lost* preferred to *Paradise Regained.* By this time Milton's health was declining, and his domestic life appears to have been disturbed. His daughters complained of the servitude of reading books in various languages to their father without knowing the meaning. "In the scene of misery which this mode of intellectual labour sets before our eyes," says Johnson, "it is hard to determine whether the daughters or the father are most to be lamented." Such a trial of patience gradually became beyond endurance, and about 1670 the daughters were all sent out to learn such curious and ingenious sorts of manufacture as are proper for women, especially embroidery in gold and silver. In the last two years of his life Milton sent to press his little *Treatise of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, and the Best Means to Prevent the Growth of Popery,* and a volume of familiar epistles in Latin, to which are added some of his Cambridge prolusions. He remained the severe scholar until the end of his life, rising between four and five and studying regularly until noon. He had long been a sufferer from the gout, and in July, 1674, he felt his end to be approaching. He died eventually of gout struck in on Sunday, November 8th, 1674, so peacefully that the time of death was not per-

ceived. He was buried on the 12th in St. Giles's, Cripplegate (the historic old church menaced twice by fire in 1666 and 1897, and still suffering by "restoration"), near his father and the historian, John Speed.[1] The Anglican service was performed over him. For some years before his death he had attended no kind of religious worship. His treatise on Christian doctrine, discovered many years later, and first published in 1823, served to show how far he had travelled from the Calvinism of his early youth. In matters of Church government he had come round to be almost an Arminian, while his religious views as a whole are verging towards pantheism, and he propounds anomalous theories of polygamy and divorce. He had quite discarded the Sabbatarian strictness of a Puritan, and unmercifully satirised the sermons by which his contemporaries set such store.[2]

The same voice, as vague and as illimitable as the murmur of the ocean, that has placed Shakespeare first among our poets has placed Milton second. By his adaptation of classical form to biblical materials, an adaptation in which the genius of pagan art is blended with the genius of a

[1] John Foxe and Frobisher are buried in this church, where Ben Jonson and Oliver Cromwell were married. A monument was erected to Milton by Sam Whitbread, the brewer. Quite recently a bronze statue has been erected in the yard. His death took place at his house, Artillery Walk, Bunhill Field.

[2] Johnson found compensation for these eccestricities and for his neglect of family prayer in his continued veneration for the Holy Scriptures. Towards his political constancy he is less charitable: "Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of control, and pride disdainful of superiority. He hated monarchs in the State and prelates in the Church, for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It has been observed that they who most loudly clamour for liberty do not most liberally grant it.

Puritan Christianity, and in which the stately severity of the Latin form and tongue is harmonised with the multitudinous vocabulary and the breathing tone and accent of our northern speech; by the encyclopædic learning which he has wedded to the most subtle and melodious art—an art which must live as long as the language to which it has afforded some of the supremest figures of speech—Milton has created for himself a monument which seems impervious alike to the gusts of popular prejudice, and to the light winds and chilling damps of critical fervour or depreciation. As of Shakespeare, it may be said there can be only one Milton! Not that time has done aught to bridge the mighty gulf that yawns between these two men of genius, so alien in well-nigh everything but dwelling-place and nationality. Shakespeare is loved and laughed over even more than he is reverenced. We may be permitted to compare his fame to Westminster Abbey—a national memorial, the pride of the whole English-speaking world, as dear to the most secular as to the most religious minded of Englishmen, dedicated to St. Peter, yet catholic only in the sense of universal. Milton's poetry and poetic fame, on the other hand, may be compared to St. Paul's, incidentally a religious structure, primarily a great Renaissance temple; second, in a way in point of definite rank, among the churches of the Empire, but far from sharing either the prestige or the love by which all men are drawn to the old foundation as to the magnetic pole.

What we know of Milton's character and domestic relations is that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women, and there appears in his book something like a Turkish contempt of females as subordinate and inferior beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education. He thought woman made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion."

FROM THE PAINTING BY G. H. BOUGHTON, BY PERMISSION OF THE PROPRIETORS OF "THE INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY OF FAMOUS LITERATURE"

MILTON'S MEETING WITH ANDREW MARVELL

It is interesting enough to follow Milton's career by means of the ordinary signposts—marriages and issue, employments, migrations, and friendships. We have traced his movements even from one house in London to another. Yet few men lived less within the four walls of a material dwelling than Milton. His life was the abstracted existence of the pure scholar. He lived in his ideas, his books, his thoughts, his art. His life was one long progress in intellectual egotism, the stages of which were marked, not by possessions and actions, but by the march of mind. Milton's scholarly arrogance and contempt for the vulgar was profound. His egotism is redeemed, however, by the fact that there was nothing sordid about it; the things of the intellect were the only things he coveted or really cared for. The world, he thought, should be governed by men of mind, by an intellectual oligarchy of Miltons. Their power was to be absolute, and was to last for life. A worse form of tyranny could not perhaps easily be devised. But Milton's relation to politics was absolutely theoretical from first to last, and, in the few cases in which he realised them, he was totally out of sympathy with the ideas, needs, and feelings of his fellow-countrymen. Holding the views that he did as to the sacredness of the Bible, and having passed through the classical training he had, it was perfectly natural that he should take the views that he did, and should have thrown in his lot with the Puritan oligarchy. He hated the crown and the prelacy in the first place for having stifled the Reformation, the blaze of Wyclif, at which all succeeding reformers had lighted their tapers. To his mind, too, as lucid, logical, and positive as that of a Frenchman, there was something essentially degrading about the flunkeyism of a court, with its cringing and servile crew "not of servants only, but of nobility and gentry, bred up to the hopes not of public but of court offices, to be stewards, chamberlains, ushers, grooms even of the close-stool." Ignoring both the historical interest and symbolical value of the crown, ignoring, too, the immense services which it had performed for England (his historical sense was slight), Milton simply saw in the pretension of one man to be the object of adoration to his fellows a position offensive not only to taste and reason, but also to common sense and decency. "All ingenious and knowing men will easily agree with me that a free commonwealth without

single persons or House of Lords is by far the best government." From an early period this was his conviction—that of a confirmed *intellectual*. He was so interested in expressing his anti-prelatical views *apropos* of the intensely interesting political situation in 1641-2, that he turned aside from his studies, and wrote those tracts on Reformation against Prelaty, which contain the most impassioned of his prose writings. His next group of tracts on Divorce (1643-5) was prompted by more personal considerations. Irritated by the contiguity of a wife of incompatible temperament, Milton set about, by his usual scholarly methods, to show the desirability of a facile divorce. He was soon convinced that he was absolutely in the right, and as usual resented opposition with the full bitterness of the unbending doctrinaire. He published these tracts without the necessary licence, and the opposition of the Stationers Company to such "unlicenced printing" occasioned his famous defence of such a practice in his *Areopagitica*. The immediate stimulus, again, was a personal one. He admits the desirability of stifling bad books, until the risk that such a process might involve—namely, the suppression of his own views as to the need of extending divorce facilities—appeared to him greater than the evil it was intended to remedy—"As good almost kill a man as kill a book." He now shows it to be a Popish practice (Galileo), this trying to crush a man's opinion, and a thing essentially unmanly to try and protect a man from every contact with danger or vice. And then comes that splendid passage in which we seem to catch the very inspiration of Burke: "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat." Its premises involved conclusions larger than he himself suspected, but the emotion which he gradually developed can be measured by the splendour of the language.

Areopagitica itself, to the scandal of stationers, was published without a licence. It was followed by a tract on Education (June, 1644), prompted by his personal interest in pedagogy and by a discussion with Samuel Hartlib, extraordinary alike for the high standard set up and for the eloquence of its language. Milton discountenanced the devotion of time to Latin composition. He begins with grammar and

pronunciation, and proceeds with the study of education, arithmetic, geography, and easy grounds of religion; the next gradation is the study of authors on agriculture—such as Varro, Columella—use of globes, and natural philosophy. Greek is then followed by the institution of physic, economics, and politics; theology and church history combined naturally with a systematic study of Hebrew and the Syriac tongues; logic, poetry, and the higher kinds of composition complete the scheme—in the course of which, as Milton remarks casually, the student may have easily learned, at any odd hour, the Italian tongue. Such a scheme was obviously adapted for the education of Miltons and the preparation of readers for the perusal of such poems as *Paradise Lost*. Of the products of this system we know but one, the fluent but superficial Edward Phillips.

An interval elapses between these two groups of tracts and those commencing in 1649, and dealing with the different phases of the political situation, such as *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, published in 1649, a fortnight after the King's execution. It was followed in October by the lengthy *Eikonoklastes*, an answer, point by point, of the famous *Eikon Basilike*,[1] which the defeated party had brought out as a testimony to the integrity of the late King, and as a shrine for the popular image of a martyred saint.

[1] "Following up the royal meditations chapter by chapter, Milton meets them with refutation, mockery, or ridicule. He feels nothing of the glamour of sentimental attachment to the royal saint. The tone of his reply is sufficiently indicated by the text prefixed to the pamphlet: 'As a roaring lyon and a ranging beare, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.' At times Milton is savagely vindictive in his antipathy to the late King, as, for instance, when he revives the malignant calumny that Charles had poisoned his own father; and throughout the pamphlet no gleam of sympathy for a fallen man, no spark of generous feeling towards a vanquished cause, lightens the stern pages of ruthless analysis and condemnation. In rhetorical ability and force of thought and language, *Eikonoklastes* completely surpasses the King's book, but the image that floated before the tear-dimmed eyes of men could not be broken by weapons of logic and argument" (Masterman, *Age of Milton*).

In the interval between these two publications Milton had been appointed Latin secretary to the Commonwealth. His justification of tyrannicide upon the grounds of reason and authority alike had attracted Cromwell's attention. The nature of the bargain implied between two natures so divergent in type as those of Milton and Cromwell was probably simple enough. Cromwell wanted the name and style of Milton—the only English scholar whose name would carry the least weight abroad, the only English Latinist who could meet that paragon of foreign linguists, Salmasius, upon his own ground. Milton, on his side (like Voltaire, or still more like Goethe in a somewhat similar situation), can hardly have failed to be flattered by the attentions and solicitings of the greatest soldier and most practical statesman of the day. He may have even been deluded as to the amount of influence which it would be in his power to exercise. The result was the almost unique diversion of the great humanist and poetic scholar for the space of ten years from working in marble to working in clay—it must almost be confessed now and again to be working in mud. For much of his political pamphleteering was devoted to Logomachia, a prose flyting, a ferocious word duel between the champions of English republicanism, so called, and Continental monarchy. One of the champions boasted that he had destroyed the eyesight, the other that he had destroyed the life, of his adversary.[1] Cromwell was perfectly right in his estimate that such a controversy would resolve itself into a competition as to which side could call names best, and also in his foresight as to the ascendency which he would be able to establish for his own views and sentiments over the ideals which were native and proper to Milton's intellectual idiosyncrasy. How completely Milton stood aloof from the popular current of his age is shown by his plea for a commonwealth as the readiest solution of all difficulties in the spring of 1660, upon the very eve of the

[1] "As Salmasius reproached Milton with losing his eyes in the quarrel, Milton delighted himself in the belief that he had shortened Salmasius's life, and both perhaps with more malignity than reason. Salmasius died at the Spa, September 3rd, 1653; and, as controvertists are commonly said to be killed by their last dispute, Milton was flattered with the credit of destroying him" (Johnson).

Restoration, when all men were thirsting for a return to the old paths of monarchy. His sympathy with the dictatorship of Cromwell, by which a real tyrant was set up in place of a sham, can hardly have been a genuine one. Milton, however, was illuded by Cromwell's marvellous adaptability in winning the best instruments that he needed for his purpose, and by the magnetism of a great personality, the personal deference of whose attitude to himself at the critical moment had subtly appealed to the poet's vanity.

Of Milton's later and miscellaneous prose writings, his letters, his histories, his manuals of grammar and logic, and his Latin treatise of Christian doctrine (disinterred from the State Paper Office, 1823), it is needless to speak in detail, as their interest is comparatively small, and they lack the passion and the inspiration of the great passages in the earlier tracts. Of his prose works as a whole it is enough to observe that the pamphlets (twenty-five in number—twenty-one English, four Latin) fill the second, or political, panel of Milton's life (1640-60). Their immediate political influence can have been decorative at best; several were written for the express purpose of asserting a personal freedom from restraint, not a few are marred by coarseness, bitterness, and violence. Yet it is not possible to agree with Mark Pattison that Milton's prose period was one during which he prostituted his genius to political party. Except where he is obviously merely the mouthpiece of Cromwell, Milton is as much of the unpractical but impeccable scholar and idealist in his prose as in his verse; and there are passages of greater splendour in Milton's prose than in almost any other English prose writer of any period whatsoever. Pestered as his prose is by the inveterate seventeenth-century habit of citation from the classic and patristic writers, and inordinate as are his periods in their complicated length, involution, and obscurity, there is a fortissimo passage here, a crescendo there, and a cadenza farther on which compensate for the longueurs, and reveal to us the fire of a poet in the rhythm, the harmony, and, above all, in the magnificent imagery which gleams and crackles and finally blazes up through the rough, unpolished surface.

It cannot be denied that there is a personal interest about Milton's prose, together with a warmth of emotion that very rarely penetrates the cold inhumanity of his artistry, as we

may call the artificial and elaborate style of his versification. It is of the cold marble, however, which endures. Milton's prose is the prose of a past manner and of a past age. Interesting as it is in revealing the personality of the great poet, we must pass from it to that which has a more permanent interest.

The first sure signs of Milton's greatness in poetry are seen in the ode *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, a noble prelude to the music of *Paradise Lost*. Scholarly though this is in form, and well constructed as is the ground-plan, it is the only one of Milton's poems that bears traces of juvenility, which is shown in the luxuriance of the imagery and phrasing and in the facile character of the rhyming. Learned though the poem is, too, it shows more signs of spontaneous and unsophisticated religious feeling than any of his later verse. The other poems of his early poetic period down to the composition of *Lycidas* in 1637 represent far more clearly and characteristically Milton's idea of poetry as the topmost and brightest flower of scholarly culture. Of such methods of poetic composition as Shakespeare or Byron might be taken to represent; of ideas caught at in the street or during the two hours' traffic of the stage, and committed to paper as rapidly in some tavern parlour under the influence of a rapid glowing imagination; of Byron's dashing theory of the essential rapidity of the conversion of poetical "estro" into printed matter, Milton had a very vague notion. The wood-notes of unstudied art, though they might be admirable in their way, were to him always wild, erratic, and rustic, for to him there would be no really high art without really highly trained study. His early poems are therefore, like those of Tennyson (*Œnone* and *The Lotus Eaters*, for example), combined exercises of observation, poetic reminiscence, and verse-craft all wrought up into the most exquisitely refined combination of the traditive, or inherited, and original elements in poetry of which we can form any conception. The subject-matter of these exercises was of comparatively little importance—the execution was the thing. Such work is in poetry that which mosaic is in the domain of graphic art—the most difficult and the most permanent of all forms. It requires the most intense concentration, the most refined powers of selection, and the most amazing combination of delicacy of touch with Herculean strength in the welding and fusing.

Such qualities are seen in technical combination in the exquisite lyrical masque of *Comus*, presented at Ludlow Castle in 1634 before the Earl of Bridgewater, then the President of Wales. The cast of the work is more Italian than English; but echoes from Jonson and Fletcher (notably in *The Sad Shepherd* and *The Faithful Shepherdess*), and from Marlowe and Shakespeare (notably in *Faustus* and *The Tempest*), are numerous and unmistakable. The dramatic argument, which is of the simplest, is suggested partly by the Circe episode in the *Odyssey* and partly by the Sacrapant and Dedia episode in Peele's *Old Wives' Tales*. Two brothers and their sister, wandering in a wood haunted by Comus, Circe's son and imitator, part from her in search of a guide and shelter. She falls, bewitched by art but protected by her virtue from any real harm, into the enchanter's power, till he is driven off by her brothers and an attending spirit (half Mentor and half Ariel), and the charm is reversed by Sabrina, the river-nymph of the Severn. The felicity of Shakespeare's rhythm, with the loss perhaps of some of its careless rapture, is caught again and again and composed into faultless passages of blank verse which has still much of the Elizabethan ring about it. Interspersed are passages in a shorter and irregular metre, both the rhymes and images of which, especially in the speeches of Comus, transmit frequent echoes both of sound and expression to Milton's next two masterpieces, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, both of which were written during Milton's Horton period.

Written for the most part in a seven or eight-syllabled verse of four beats, with subtly varied modulations, these two wonderful poems well illustrate what has been said of Milton's extraordinary power of making a poem of what, as far as regards subject-matter, might be termed no more than a very artificial exercise in the use of poetic material. The poet soliloquises in *L'Allegro* as a cheerful and in *Il Penseroso* as a melancholic man; and so remarkable is the pictorial richness of the adjectives with which both soliloquies are inwrought that, after supplying the anthologists of four generations with their richest spoils, the poems have gone farther, and have supplied our speech of every day with some of its choicest felicities. The beauty of the verse-phrasing and expression has been thought by many to reach its climax in the last twenty-two verses of *Il Penseroso*:

"But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloysters pale,
And love the high embowed roof,
With antic pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light:
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full voic'd quire below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heav'n before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heav'n doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew;
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures Melancholy [1] give,
And I with thee will choose to live."

Three years after the date of *Comus* appeared *Lycidas*. The occasion of the elegy was the death of Edward King, a popular fellow of Christ's College, who had been drowned in crossing the Irish Channel, August, 1637. The universities were wont at this time to celebrate notable events in national or academic life by publishing collections of eulogistic verses in Latin or English. The anthology was published in April, 1638, Milton, who had been a college contemporary of King's, contributing the last of the English poems. The occasion was the propriety of hanging a laurel wreath in memory of a college friend, and the imagery and arrangement of the poem were those of such pastoral models as Theocritus and Virgil, as already imitated in England by Spenser. The due consideration of these facts cuts the ground from Dr. Johnson's splenetic attack upon *Lycidas* in his *Lives of the Poets* on the grounds of its hollowness, insincerity, and artificiality. The poem was not intended as the vehicle of a profound personal

[1] Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* had appeared in 1621.

sentiment; it was a decorative wreath woven and bent with incomparable skill in strict accordance with a conventional form of universal acceptance and the most reverend antiquity. In poetic beauty, and perhaps we should say in metrical skill also, it is a poem almost without a rival.[1] The wonderful variety of its numbers, from a solemn and psalm-like grandeur, to the lightest delicacy and playfulness, the variegated harmony of the verse (the ground of which is the heroic verse of Marlowe) suggest the indebtedness of Milton to the form of the *canzone* as employed by Petrarch and Boccaccio. But the timbre of the rhythm of *Lycidas* is still thoroughly English and Elizabethan—a last mournful echo, as it were, of an age the inspiration of which was so soon to pass away for ever. The Elizabethans having died out, fully a hundred years were to elapse before our literature could produce in Collins and Gray two men capable of even appreciating such a poem as *Lycidas*.[1]

Milton began to write his great epic, the evolution of which had so long beset his mind, in the year of Cromwell's death —1658, the poet himself being then fifty years old. His second wife and her infant had recently died, but he was left the three daughters of his first marriage, and lived with them in Petty France,—studying for his great poem line by line and almost letter by letter, mainly in the night season from October to March. The lines were dictated in parcels of ten, twenty, or thirty verses at a time, and his younger daughters (who envied their elder sister who could not read, so irksome did they find the task) were frequently summoned at night time to take down lines not one of which the whole world could

[1] "No English poem exhibits a more exquisite harmony and variety of numbers, or a more extraordinary science of rhyme, while very few of anything like the same length have a greater number of signal phrases memorable for thought or music or both" (Saintsbury).

[2] The revival of the study of poetry in the nineteenth century led to its partial imitation in two noble dirges conceived somewhat in the same spirit—Shelley's *Adonais* and Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis*. The latter poem is far tenderer than *Lycidas*, and *Adonais* is charged with much deeper and more symphonic thought and passion. But both poems owe to *Lycidas* a debt which *Lycidas* owes to no other poem.

have replaced. "Grand, indeed, is the thought of this unequalled strain poured forth, when every other voice was hushed in the mighty city, to no meaner accompaniment than the music of the spheres." The MS. of *Paradise Lost* was completed at Chalfont St. Giles in 1665, and a fair copy was then made by a scrivener. The poem was officially licenced for publication in 1666, but did not appear until August, 1667, when it was published by Mr. Samuel Simmons, "next door to the Golden Lion, Aldersgate Street," in a small 4to of 342 pages called *Paradise Lost, written in Ten Books by John Milton*, price 3*s*. Milton received £10 for the first edition of 1,300 copies. A second edition appeared in 1674 (when the ten books were rearranged in twelve), shortly after which Mrs. Milton sold her rights in this and any successive editions for £8. A fourth edition appeared in 1688, from which date to 1750 the issue of Milton remained a profitable monopoly in the publishing house of Tonson. "In the history of *Paradise Lost* a deduction thus minute will rather gratify than fatigue."

The character of Milton's poetic production is (more than is the case with most poets) partly the result of the character of his studies. He set out to be a poet—to make himself a poet. Being already a poet born, he set out to equip himself for his essential business of making poetry. And the training he gave himself lay chiefly in the study of Latin and Greek literature. This did not merely result in his poetry being full of reminiscences of the "classics." His mind was very fully of classical poetry; he must have thought about men and things largely in the form of quotations—and the result is that we get an increasing proportion of reminiscence, and more than that—the deliberate making up and adaptation of phrases and images from the Latin and Greek, and of course a very Latinised vocabulary.

The diction, the mannerism, of *Paradise Lost* is admittedly not that of earlier poets any more than of ordinary speech. Milton made for himself a manner of speaking suitable to the scale of things he was representing and the dignity of his persons. The manner itself was suggested by the Latin, chiefly by Virgil: hence a new fashion of poetic speech, created in the first instance by the urgency of Milton's need for more sustained notes in English verse and by his absorption in classical literature. Milton's mastery of blank verse—apart from his mannerisms—was also largely due to his classical

studies. His one great model for blank verse in English was Shakespeare. But Shakespeare's blank verse was not epical; it was everything else, but it was not epical. Nevertheless, Milton might perhaps have learned what he wanted from Shakespeare; but it is evident that he did not. Nor did he go to Spenser for verse models. He went to the classical or quantitative blank verse. His study of it must have enormously trained and improved his ear, quickened his extraordinary sense of consonantal syllabic values, and refined his extraordinary sense of the value both of quantity and of accent. So far as this was not innate, he got it from the classics; it was on them that he sharpened his ear. The result of this is seen in the fact that Milton's blank verse is not Elizabethan; one might almost say it was not English till he wrote it. He comes at last to the verse of the *Samson Agonistes*, and this was the logically complete development of the Miltonic blank verse. Blank verse, in short, was to him not an Elizabethan verse-form, but a classical verse-form which he had to adapt to English; and he adapted it, finally, as if there had been no English blank verse before.

If there is one quality in Milton which one should single out as undeniably great and altogether extraordinary by itself, it is his infallible sense of accentual and consonantal values, together with the mastery of language, which enabled him to realise his ideal harmony between sense and sound in almost every line. His effects depend to an extraordinary degree upon the exact words he uses and their exact order in the line. Examples are everywhere:

> "While the bright pomp ascended jubilant!"

> "Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air."

> "From Arachosia, from Candaor east,
> And Margiana, to the Hyrcanian cliffs
> Of Caucasus, and dark Iberian dales."

And after this calculated harmony of sense and sound, we should admire, in the second place, the complex mutation in Milton's periods, and the studied variety of the Miltonic cæsura or pause.

There is no mystery in Milton's poetry, and this is one great

reason why many lovers of poetry find it dull and lacking in suggestion. It is, in fact, singularly lacking in suggestiveness. Milton's mind is very Latin. It seeks definition and precision everywhere. It materialises. He believes that if only you knew rather more about what happened you could explain quite nicely in the English language just what the thought of God was when He started the world, and His relations with the devil would be quite clear and intelligible to us if the Bible record were a trifle fuller. It is quite natural to him to regard heaven and hell as substantial portions of space. What else should they be? He does not shrink from making God talk English. He really thinks that God's thought could be expressed in English. At least he believed this just as much as he believed in Adam and Eve and the whole story. In his universe there is nothing essentially beyond the powers of the human (Miltonic) mind. But if he has no sense of mystery he is an absolute master of the vague. His effects of vague horror are perhaps the finest of any (the magnificent finales of Books II. and IV., for instance, or the awe-inspiring descriptions of the shapes by hell's mouth in Book II., line 650, etc., especially 656-73). They make up to some extent for the undue hardness of his usual drawing. Milton, then, is a supreme artist in words and syllabic values and a master of all kinds of poetic artifice, and he has a singularly precise imagination which is at its very best in description of the vague and enormous, to which he succeeds in giving just enough description to make it impressive. But though he is rigidly logical within his limits and very definite in thought, he is not much of a thinker; his mythopœic faculty entirely transcends and is nourished in exuberant excess of his ratiocinative powers. The worst of it is that the myths he makes are not beautiful, nor are they symbolic; they are just myths. The conceptions underlying *Paradise Lost* are absurd and even childish. No mediæval divine would have fallen into such absurdities. It is not merely a matter of artillery in heaven; a sense of humour would have saved him from symbolism of that sort, if symbolism it is. But his representation of God might almost be a caricature of popular notions. Satan's declaration that God is only greater than he because he has the secret of thunder—"whom thunder has made greater" (I. 258)—seems quite true of the Miltonic God—the God who says:

FROM THE PAINTING BY SIR EDWIN LANDSEER, R.A.

THE DEFEAT OF COMUS

"Nearly it now concerns us to be sure (V. 720)
Of our omnipotence . . .
. . . lest unawares we lose
This our high place, our sanctuary, our hill."

Paradise Lost is the greatest of Milton's poems, (1) because more of his mature thought, more of his altogether, went into it than any other: (2) because, though the verse-craft of *Samson* and *Paradise Regained* is as great, the austerity of those poems is such that beauty is sacrificed to a sheer severity of line that becomes barren and monotonous; (3) it represents in the grand manner the life experience of a poet who was called upon to live during the epic age of our country's history.

The earlier poems have not quite the same verse mastery, and are a much less complete expression of the poet's mind. But they are certainly the most beautiful of any. For the beauty of the style of *Paradise Lost* is to a great extent marred by its subject-matter, which, regarded as a sort of fairy tale, is a dull and rather unpleasant one; while, regarded as an exposition of the universe, it is primitive and incoherent to an extent that is glaringly out of keeping with the perfection of the most chastened and refined Renaissance craftsmanship. Nor, though wonderfully managed and fitting the nature of the narrative, can one admire the mannerisms of *Paradise Lost* in itself. The typical line of this mannerism is such as this:

"To whom the Patriarch of Mankind replied" (V. 506),

or—

"To whom our general ancestor returned,"

for "Adam said." When these lines extend to whole passages they assume a pseudo-classical rotundity which caught the taste of the next age, and was largely responsible for the characteristic poetic diction of the eighteenth century.

But there is the same artificiality even in *Lycidas*, in which there is not the least sign of any real regret for the "learned friend" amid all the elaboration of the verse. Milton's poetry lacks emotion. It is of the nature of an intellectual descant or thesis, an exercise or a lecture, and, at the highest, an effort intellectually to realise and represent the utterly incom-

prehensible. Deeply though Milton had studied Spenser, and probably also Donne and Crashaw and Herbert, he had much more sympathy than they had with the marmoreal side of Renaissance culture; hence a certain frigidity and absence of that individual and personal note which breaks so appealingly upon the ear after the extremely impersonal and objective character of Elizabethan poetry. Whenever the personal note *is* struck in Milton, and it is very rarely (but notably in the opening descants of Books III. and VII.), such passages are treasured as beyond all price. They give the warmth which is so commonly lacking in these high aërial altitudes.

In the same volume with *Paradise Regained*, published by John Starkey in 1671, appeared Milton's last great work, the partly autobiographical poem of his darkened old age—*Samson Agonistes*. As with the subject-matter of *Paradise Lost*, Milton had been anticipated both in the subject and form of *Samson* by the contemporary Dutch poet Vondel; but Milton's drama is cast in a much more severely classical mould, and the verse of it, appropriately to the requirements of drama, is much less regularly symphonic than the verse of *Paradise Lost*. As in a Greek drama, the action is simple, the persons few, the statuesque severity of the iambic dialogue being relieved by the stately strophes of the chorus, which bears the same close relation to the development of the plot as in the tragedies of Sophocles. Samson himself acts as spokesman in the Greek manner at the beginning of the drama, and the catastrophe is related in the Attic fashion through the agency of a messenger. The whole piece reflects faithfully the austere patriotism and religious feeling of the Old Testament, but so closely are details of style and construction borrowed from Hellenic drama that it is no exaggeration to say that the modern reader derives a more accurate impression of Sophocles from *Samson Agonistes* than from any English translation; or to repeat Goethe's saying that *Samson Agonistes* had more of the antique spirit than any modern poem. It is characteristic of the more austere sublimity of Milton's later art that the mythology is drawn from the rugged strength of the more primitive poets, such as Hesiod and Homer (Jove and the Titans, Night and Chaos, Rhea and Saturn). In his use of ancient mythology and geography, as in his use of proper names of epic catalogues generally, of

Petrarchan *canzone*, of the "occasional" sonnet and of the verse paragraph, Milton polished to a perfection of contour what had existed hitherto in but rudimentary shape. More than this, he partly created and partly shaped for himself, with a view to his exceptional needs as an epic poet and wielder of a measure not less stately, to be sure, than that of Virgil, a complete body of *poetic diction*. Spenser, as we have seen, did something of this kind out of archaic dialect and purely English materials. Milton was far from disdaining a pastoral vocabulary, and in *Lycidas* he employs a number of words of true Spenserian mould. His needs, however, far transcended those of Spenser, and in the course of *Paradise Lost* he called into being a large vocabulary of his own evocation from the Latin tongue. This vocabulary and the facilities afforded by it for paraphrase of homely English substantive, adjective, or verb entirely won the heart of our heroic composers from Pope to Hayley, and they ground out commonplaces in it so unmercifully that Wordsworth, in a moment of exasperation, decreed that the whole gaudy concern must go by the board. The danger of playing at Milton has now been fully recognised.

Milton can get more vibration out of a word than any poet in our language. He worked upon the foundations of verbal utterance (as Chatham for other purposes knew how to do), and every word with him is charged not only with its plain meaning and its life-history as a word, but is fraught with a subtle music struck from some secret chord, and freighted with a long chain of poetic reminiscence. In this manner is Milton's style nourished with the best thought and finest expression of Time. In this way does the phrase become not only an intellectual exercise, but also an emotional force, while *Paradise Lost* becomes the Historic Peerage in which we rummage for the pedigree of every stray slip from the House of Poetry that lays claim to a noble lineage or an ancient inheritance. It is probably no exaggeration to say that Milton is the greatest master of the poetic art in modern times —at any rate, since Dante. It is true that, as compared with Spenser or Shakespeare, for instance, there is an almost inhuman severity about his art: the claims of æsthetic beauty are with Milton unduly paramount over those of emotion or feeling, and the interpretation of his parable is to modern

ideas much too strained. The poet, nevertheless, extorts our homage; he compels our reverence, and the more we understand, the deeper that reverence tends to become.[1]

[1] The two older universities have both issued handsome texts of Milton's, but Henry J. Todd's edition (first issued in 1801, and supplemented by a Life and a Verbal Index) remains the most complete, while the just favourite of the public is Professor Masson's edition (3 vols., or condensed in one as the Globe edition*). Of the *Poems* first printed in 1645, Thomas Warton's edition of 1785 has not been surpassed. A rough draught of the MS. is preserved at Trinity, Cambridge (Facsimile 1899). There are handy reprints in the Little Library and in the Gateway Series. Dr. Johnson's famous anti-honeysuckle Life of Milton was written in January-February, 1779; it was based mainly upon the spade-work of Wood, Aubrey, Phillips, and Jonathan Richardson. Prof. David Masson's noble monument to the biographical fame of Milton, commenced in 1859, was completed in 1894. Lowell was strangely infelicitous in his comments upon Masson's *Life and Times of Milton*, and provoked from Jowett the oft-cited quotation, "O for a stone-bow to hit him in the eye!" Among the shorter studies the most notable are those of Mark Pattison (1880), Dr. Richard Garnett (1889), W. P. Trent (1899), and Walter Raleigh (1900). Valuable studies of Milton's thought are given by Dowden and Tulloch, of his classical mythology by C. G. Osgood (1900), and of his prosody by R. Bridges (1893) and Courthope (*History of English Poetry*). In the harmonious sea of Miltonic verse, as Courthope points out, the rhythmic unity of the single verse or line is subtly balanced with that of the verse paragraph, the cadence of which is punctuated and varied until it acquires a beauty and proportion approximating that of a rhyming stanza. These periods are bound together into a single chain of harmony by a hitherto unrivalled use of the old Anglo-Saxon principle of alliteration; and the whole of his verse is thus welded into a symphonic whole, governed by principles of verse harmony (innate in the language but hitherto undeveloped) and wrought into a system governed by the intuition of sheer musical genius, from which a scheme of Miltonic prosody as regular and complete as the classical prosody of a Virgil can be systematically deduced. To carry such a vast weight of imagination and learning, a

metrical vehicle of extraordinary complexity was indispensable; and perhaps of all European languages English alone could have provided what was required. For in our tongue the Teutonic and the Latin genius unite, just as our constitution has been the instrument of reconciliation between the Norman and Saxon races, between monarchy and feudalism, between absolutism and republican freedom, between ecclesiastical tradition and the liberty of conscience. Valuable suggestions have been made in dealing with this part of the subject by Mr. J. W. Allen. Some interesting remarks upon the Iconography of Milton are scattered in S. Leigh Sotheby's *Ramblings in Elucidation of the Autograph of Milton*, 1861. The poet wrote an exceptionally fine and delicate hand. For "New Lights" on Milton see *Quarterly Review*, No. 194.

In 1750 William Lauder issued his *Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns in his "Paradise Lost,"* an indictment of wholesale plagiarism against the poet, but the charge was itself an imposture, and as such was exposed by Bishop John Douglas in 1751. Warton and other critics have shown progressively the enormous extent to which Milton wove into his fabric the felicities of other men's phrasing wherever he found them. But such discoveries, as in the cognate case of Tennyson, only enhance our admiration for the semi-miraculous power of transforming while assimilating—a species of transubstantiation. *Nova Solyma*, a Latin romance modelled upon the *New Atlantis* (printed in six books by John Legat in 1648 and translated by Walter Begley in 1902), was claimed as Milton's; but his silence in regard to it and the un-Miltonic character of its Latinity are fairly conclusive against its being his. As a Latin poet he was surpassed by Campion, and perhaps also by Cowley and May. Milton's collections for a Latin Dictionary were extensively utilised by the editors of the *Cambridge Dictionary* of 1693. As in the case of Shakespeare, Milton's unique greatness was promptly recognised in England. Abroad, his genuis obtained a certain recognition, especially in Germany, before Shakespeare was heard of, and a good Life has been done by a German, Alfred Stern (1879). For all that we are sceptical as to the possibility of a complete appreciation of *Lycidas* or *Paradise Lost* (in such passages as I. 780, II. 490, IV. 130) by any save a true-born native ear.

CHAPTER IX

PROTO-RATIONALISTS: THOMAS HOBBES

"Hobbes was a thinker and writer of marvellous power, and taken altogether, is probably the greatest of English philosophers."—HUXLEY.

Lord Herbert of Cherbury and Thomas Hobbes of Maimesbury —Lord Clarendon—The Royal Society.

EDWARD HERBERT, known to fame as Lord Herbert of Cherbury, was born at Eyton, in Shropshire, on March 3rd, 1583—in the same year with Massinger and the great jurist who afterwards became his friend, Hugo Grotius (Hobbes was born only five years later). He was a remote kinsman of the great Pembroke and Powis families, and an elder brother of the deepest and sweetest of religious songsters, George Herbert, who sang on earth, wrote old Izaak, such hymns and anthems as he and the angels and Mr. Ferrar now sing in heaven.

Of his early youth, with its impossibly precocious questions and orations, his innate antipathy to deceit, and suchlike, Lord Herbert tells us much in his queer braggadocio *Autobiography,* which Walpole found so side-splitting on first reading it in manuscript that he persisted in having it printed, and finally overcame the opposition of the Powis family in the matter. It certainly presents their kinsman in a singular light—a compound of the gasconading Urquhart, the translator of Rabelais, and of the fire-eating Alan Breck—for ever boasting of his duels, his gentle blood, and his genealogical choler.

Of his Oxford career Herbert says little, but he has much about his ailments and his accomplishments—swimming,

dressing, dancing, fencing, and "riding the great horse." At eighteen he married Sir William Herbert of St. Julians' daughter, and went to court, where Queen Elizabeth was profoundly impressed by his *beaux yeux* (so he gives us to understand), patted him twice on the cheek, and swore by "God's death" it was a grievous pity that he was married, and so young, too. A few good stories will be found intertwined amid the texture of his hunting and duelling and diplomatic exploits, such as the Duke of Montmorency's wary answer to Henri IV. when he offered money in exchange for Chantilly: "Sieur, la maison est à vous, mais que je sois le concierge." Or his answer to the Duke of Neuburg: "Of what died Sir Francis Vere?" "Per aver niente a fare" (Of having nothing to do); and Spinola's comment, "And it is enough to kill any general."

Herbert's own later career forms a gloomy and ironical epilogue to the triumphal portion. In 1624, when he was still little over forty, he was deprived of his ambassadorship in the interests of James I.'s weak and capricious diplomacy. He was rewarded with the cheap honour of an Irish peerage, but could not get the arrears of his salary. His devices to get back again into employment were all in vain; all that Charles would concede him was to exchange his Irish for an English peerage. He set to work gloomily upon his *Life of Henry VIII.*, his Philosophical Treatises, and his *Autobiography*. Upon the outbreak of the Civil War he hedged frankly until 1644, when such a course became no longer possible. He then had to make over his castle of Montgomery to the Parliament, and proceeded almost destitute to London, where he died in Queen Street, St. Giles's, on August 20th, 1648, in receipt of a Parliament pension of £20 a month. His defection spelt ruin to the Royalist cause in Montgomeryshire; and in most people's opinion the "heroic" Herbert had saved his property at the expense of his honour.

In literature the "black lord" has a niche not only as the author of the delightfully impertinent and coxcombical *Autobiagraphy* (first published at the Strawberry Hill Press in 1764), in which his gusto in bragging about himself and developing his personality gives his writing an aroma of really fine literature, but also as the creator of an elaborate historical eulogy of *Henry VIII.* (first published in 1649) and as the versifier of *Poems* (first issued in 1665), as obscure and as rugged as those of his master Donne, in which, however, Herbert used the metre already used by Raleigh and since consecrated by Tennyson in *In Memoriam* with genuine feeling. As the author of the *De Veritate* (1624), *De Causis Errorum* (1645, to which was appended the tract, *Religio Laici*), and *De Religione Gentilium* (Amsterdam, 1663, first in English 1709), Herbert accomplished work of more significance, and has fully justified his title in the eyes of later historians to be called the father of English Deism. In these works, roughly and summarily speaking, Herbert rejects the idea of Revelation, but maintains that all men alike entertain innate ideas on the subject of God and the future life. Incidentally he describes sin as very often attributable to hereditary physical defects, and declares that a virtuous man, whatever form his religion may take, will attain to the reward of happiness. In his estimate of the value of common sense as a guide, and of the significance of the universality of fundamental ideas, Herbert was a pioneer of the school of common-sense philosophers, as in other respects he was one of the very first of English autobiographers and of English metaphysicians; while in his *Ode upon a Question moved whether Love should continue Forever,* he was, perhaps, the first to employ the stanza of *In Memoriam.*

Herbert's work encountered a storm of indignation; but it bore fruit in the work of Hobbes, Chillingworth, Cud-

worth, and the later speculations of Deists such as Toland, Tindal, and Collins.[1]

Thomas Hobbes was born on April 5th, 1588, his birth being hastened by the fear of Mrs. Hobbes that the Spaniards of the Armada were making straight for the town of Malmesbury, in which the Hobbes family had set up its tent. The philosopher's father was vicar of an adjoining parish—and rather a strange one, if the story be true that he once woke up in church after a nap and informed the congregation that "clubs were trumps." This worldly-minded cleric had to leave his charge in consequence of an act of violence perpetrated upon one of his flock. A worthy uncle, who was, like Shakespeare's father, a glover, took charge of the deserted family, and sent Tom to school and college (Magdalen Hall, Oxford, 1603-8). When he was twenty, and had taken his degree, he had the good fortune to be made a page to William Cavendish, a youth of eighteen, born with an enormous silver spoon in his mouth, and afterwards second Earl of Devonshire. Hobbes made the grand tour and settled down happily at Chatsworth, the friend of his pupil and a favourite with his family, who gave him all the books he wanted. Under the Cavendishes' roof he probably met Ben Jonson, and may have met Bacon.

Unhappily for Hobbes's continuance in the retreat in which his serenest and happiest years were passed, the second Earl died of "excessive indulgence in good living" in 1628, and the Dowager Countess found it necessary, or at any rate desirable, to retrench. Hobbes was comparatively fortunate in obtaining a travelling tutorship. He was now forty years of age, and it was during the next few years that an introduction to geometry and to Descartes first

[1] See De Remusat's interesting monograph on *Lord Herbert* (Paris, 1874), Churton Collins's edition of the *Poems* (1881), and Sidney Lee's edition of the *Autobiography* (with continuation 1886).

gave his mind its decided philosophic bent. Among other learned men whose personal acquaintance he made on his foreign tour should be mentioned Galileo, Gassendi, Mersenne, and Selden. It became his ambition now to be numbered among the philosophers. He abandoned the grazing habit of the mere scholar, and devoted himself to profound contemplations upon the origin of matter. In 1631 he was mightly pleased on being recalled to the Cavendish household as tutor to the third Earl, and henceforth his relations with the family were virtually unbroken. He was as felicitous in the munificent patronage of the Cavendish family as was Locke subsequently in that of "Sir Francis Masham, at Oates, in Essex." When he went abroad for the third time, in 1634, he was welcomed by the European thinkers as a fellow inquirer. In three years he returned, and in the intervals of tutorial work, which became more and more frequent, began the exposition of his system of philosophy. His meditations were interrupted by the outbreak of the Civil War, upon which Hobbes, who was not a fighting man, led the van of the *emigrés* to France, where he continued eleven years.

Hobbes, the Herbert Spencer of the seventeenth century, now commenced steady work at his system of synthetic philosophy. It is true that he contributed nothing of the slightest value to the special sciences; but he worked out a legal and political theory which had a very powerful and direct effect upon the course of speculation, while the indirect effects of his system of inquiry were undoubtedly immense. His "selfish system" of moral philosophy was expounded primarily in one or two minor writings, especially the *De Corpore Politico,* the *Elementa Philosophica de Cive,* and the small *Treatise on Human Nature,* followed by an admirably cogent *Letter upon Liberty and Necessity.* The most enduring part of his system is that which forms a contribution to political science, and it is

more important now historically, on account of its independent and scientific spirit, than as a working theory. The most valuable part of his synthesis is summarised in the *Leviathan*.[1] In this Hobbes detaches the political man swayed primarily by fear of his fellow-men, just as the economist detaches the "economic man" swayed primarily by self-interest. From the principle of self-preservation he deduces as a pure necessity the growth and concentration of the sovereign power. The *bête-noire* of every sensible person, he implies, is a mixed government—a disputed sovereignty. Human progress is conditioned by an implicit contract between the people and the sovereign—a kind of pact or covenant in which the interests of that overwhelming need, security, the individual (*en bloc,* thus forming the people) resigns his right of waging private war and his right of governing himself generally into the hands of a sovereign. Military, civil, legislative, and administrative power is transferred wholly into the hands of this sovereign; the multitude thus acquires unity through the agency of this sovereign-Leviathan. When this sovereign ceases to ensure peace and to protect his subjects, then and then only the compact can be relaxed. The end of his institution is peace, and as long as peace is preserved the sovereign is supreme, irresponsible, of indefeasible title. Law is simply the command of the sovereign. He goes still further, and identifies law and morality. To maintain order, he contends, is to enforce morality. If the Church says otherwise, the Church is wrong; but the Church in any case must be rigorously subordinated to the authority of the sovereign.

Underneath Hobbes's somewhat crude, and sometimes incoherent, but always lucidly expressed, exposition, it will

[1] *Leviathan: or, The Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil* (1651), with a symbolical title-page.

thus be seen that there is a logical, rationalistic, profound, and thoroughly modern conception of State right. Personally Hobbes preferred monarchy, no doubt, but he scarcely argues for one form of government more than another; his special point is that in every form, monarchic, aristocratic, or democratic, there must be a sovereign—an ultimate supreme and single authority (the political like the animal organism being essentially a unit). Regarding the theory locally and superficially, Hobbes's contemporaries looked upon his sovereign-Leviathan, invested with supreme power over both material force and force of opinion, as a portent and a monster. Time and competition, however, have shown Hobbes's theory of the necessity of State unity to be essentially correct, and in England the theoretic power of Leviathan sovereignty has long been conferred upon the committee of wealthy landowners, lawyers, and labour controllers which goes by the name of Parliament.

In morals and law there can be little doubt that Hobbes is the progenitor of Austin, Romilly, and Bentham. In logic he is the ancestor of John Stuart Mill. In many respects he stands as a thinker head and shoulders above any of his generation, though it included such powerful thinkers as Descartes, Herbert, and Pascal. In his time, however, his avowedly low estimate of human nature caused many well-intentioned people to regard his views as blasphemous. His inclination to take a somewhat aggressive and dogmatic line in upholding the cause of science made him specially obnoxious to all religious cults alike. The various sects competed with one another in repudiating his views and holding him up as the enemy of religion. And "Hobbism" was invariably referred to, even by the superior minds among them, as a kind of shallow but subversive and poisonous atheism—much as the ideas of Voltaire or Tom Paine were referred to a century ago.

In the meantime, Hobbes's candour in criticising had led

to his rapid retreat from Paris. He had renewed acquaintance with the Cavendish family during their exile; he had patronised and aided the precocious young philosopher, William Petty; he had even for a time been mathematical tutor to the exiled Prince of Wales (Charles II.); but he had lost his best friends Mersenne and Gassendi, he had managed to alienate Descartes, his views on ecclesiastical matters were regarded as dangerously subversive, and the *Leviathan,* which the author presented in manuscript to Charles upon his return to Paris after his escape after Worcester, was deemed by Clarendon and all the Conservatives to be a most insidious and demoralising book. The result was that he had to retreat to England and make his peace with the "Rump." Like the man of peace that he was, he justified this reconciliation with the *de facto* Leviathan by an ingenious double-edged sophistry. To the Roundheads he said that he was setting an example of rational submission to the existing *régime;* to the Cavaliers he explained that by submitting to the enemy betimes he was diminishing the plunder of the usurpers, and so would be better able, in the fulness of time, to serve his rightful sovereign.

In 1653 he again became a member of the Earl of Devonshire's household, this time at Latimers, in Buckinghamshire. During the next few years he incurred considerable ridicule at the hands of John Wallis and the Royal Societarians by his unguarded incursions into geometry and his persistent claim to have solved the problem of squaring the circle. The Churchmen and politicians of the old school were only too glad of a pretext to sneer at him as a mere paradox-monger in philosophy. Fanaticism was very far at that time from being fangless, and people were not wanting who sought in the dangerous growth of "Hobbism" for an explanation of the great pestilence of 1665. A parliamentary committee in quest of the best practical means of suppressing atheism was "instructed to receive information

about Mr. Hobbes's *Leviathan.*" Fortunately, the old philosopher had a firm friend in Charles II., who always welcomed his appearance at court as a signal for amusement, and who put him down on the pension list for £100 a year. With the aid of Charles, Arlington, and the Devonshires he managed to defy the clergy, though very little love was lost between them.

When his eightieth year was passed he abandoned philosophic controversy, and, like Cowper, devoted his declining years to a translation of Homer into English verse. This long work, in which the measure adopted is that of the decasyllabic quatrain, has more of the quaint to recommend it than of the beautiful, yet it contains beauties in odd corners, as where, for instance, the son of Hector in his nurse's arms with "his beautiful and shining golden head" is compared to "a star upon her bosom."

In November, 1679, being now well over ninety-one, Hobbes was attacked by a mortal complaint, which was aggravated by his moving with the family from Chatsworth to Hardwick. He died there on December 4th, and was buried in the chancel of the parish church of Hault-Hucknall.

We get a vivid idea of the philosopher's personality and habits from the charmingly unsystematic gossip of Aubrey.[1] We learn thus that Hobbes was a decidedly handsome and witty old man, exceptionally good-tempered perhaps for a philosopher, but swayed by philosophic habits, and latterly, at any rate, as impatient of contradiction as Descartes or Spencer himself.

[1] After Aubrey read Sir Leslie Stephen's entertaining monograph on *Hobbes** (in English Men of Letters) and Sir J. F. Stephen's Essays in *Horæ Sabbaticæ* (II.). The *Leviathan* is reprinted by the Pitt Press (1903) and in the Universal Library. Molesworth's annotated edition (1846) is in 16 volumes.

He walked much and contemplated, and he had in the head of his staff a pen and inkhorn; in his pocket was ever a notebook, and as soon as a thought darted he promptly entered it in his book, otherwise he might have lost it. Every chapter was planned out in advance and in detail, so that he knew at once into what pigeon-hole the warm idea was to be placed. He read comparatively little, but thought the more, and wrote, as we have seen, much. In his later years he rose about seven, and breakfasted on bread-and-butter; then he walked and meditated till ten; he dined at eleven, as his stomach could not bear waiting till the Earl's dinner at two. After dinner he took a pipe of tobacco and a nap, and in the afternoon wrote down his morning's thoughts. He had been much addicted to music in his youth, and practised on the bass viol. He had always books of "prick-song" lying on his table, such as Lawes's songs, and at night, when he was in bed and the doors made fast, so that he was sure of being unheard, he would sing aloud for his health's sake. He denied the common report that he was afraid to be alone on account of ghosts. He was not afraid of spirits, but of being knocked on the head for £5 or £10. Hobbes was evidently careful about his health, and a believer in bodily exercise. He played tennis occasionally, and when in the country, where there was no tennis-court, walked up and down hill till he was in a great sweat, and then had himself rubbed down. Of his vices we hear little, even from his adversaries. He calculated, for Aubrey's benefit, that he had been drunk about a hundred times (not more) in the course of his life. Kennett speaks of a natural daughter, whom he called his *delictum juventutis,* and for whom he provided; but if he had been habitually immoral, his respectable opponents would hardly have refrained from obstreperous accusation.

Perhaps the most durable literary monument of the Commonwealth was the noted *History* of Clarendon. As

a political narrative of an historian's own time it has not been surpassed in this country. Edward Hyde (born at Dinton, near Salisbury, February, 1609; died at Rouen, December 9th, 1674), who became Earl of Clarendon at the Restoration, took a prominent part in England's history. His reproachful fidelity in a great cause, his inopportune conservatism, his qualifications as a scapegoat, and the "gust of envy" which finally transported him back to exile—all these things are bound up with our knowledge of the great political struggle between Venetian oligarchy and Tudor despotism which raged from 1628 to 1688. The famous *History of the Rebellion* was written originally in island refuges between 1645 and 1648. Into its texture was subsequently woven the more public portions of an autobiography, written 1669-70. The unused portion of this *Life* of Clarendon (which remains a most interesting and amusing and instructive document) was subsequently printed in 1759. The *History* appeared at Oxford, 1702-4. From the first it had an important influence upon political thought. It was based upon noble models (chiefly the Latin historians Livy and Tacitus), and at its best the style, though copious, is strong and clear. It is partial, discursive, and uneven; but it is to be remembered that it was originally intended partly as a manifesto, and rather as an "exact memorial of passages" than a "digested relation." Nothing can replace it as a vivid narrative of those twenty memorable years, 1640-60; for it was written by a chief actor, in whose memory lingered details simply priceless to the historian. Macaulay justly commended it as a splendid study for a young man, and Sir Walter Scott, but for Constable's "fall from heaven," would have annotated it as it deserved.

Clarendon's work suggests a comparison with Thucydides, in that Hyde was himself a prominent actor in the events that he describes, and there are especially in his

character-sketches,[1] passages that will bear comparison with the *graffiti* of the great Athenian master. As in the case of Thucydides, too, banishment from his native country gave Hyde an opportunity for calm and detached contemplation of the events through which he had lived. But there the comparison ends. The inner spirit of the two men is different. Neither his double exile nor advancing years brought philosophic calm or intellectual fairness to Clarendon. He writes now as a partisan of the monarchy, now of the Church, now of his own administration; lack of insight or of knowledge precludes a clear vision of his opponents' point of view. But none the less, Clarendon's work is epoch-making in the development of English historical writing. His book is a national monument. Here the nation's story is told by a man of practical knowledge, in language well suited to the subject, and in a tone of honest conviction. For a century and a half (until its prestige was sapped by the no less partial presentment of Carlyle) it fixed the ideas of Englishmen with regard to the prominent actors in the great Puritan revolution.[2]

[1] To celebrate the memories of eminent and extraordinary persons Clarendon held to be one of the principal ends of history; hence the portraits which fill so many pages. His characters "are not simply bundles of characteristics, but consistent and full of life, sketched sometimes with affection, sometimes with light humour. Evelyn described them as so just and tempered, without the least ingredient of passion or tincture of revenge, yet with such natural and lively touches as show his lordship well knew not only the persons' outsides but their very interiors." Pepys describes Hyde's eloquence in debate as a mighty pretty thing. He was one of the first statesman in England who owed promotion directly to literary and forensic skill. As a young man he knew Jonson, Waller, Selden, Falkland, Hales.

[2] See *Characters and Episodes of the Great Rebellion*, ed. G. D. Boyle, 1889. The best edition of the *History* is W. D. Macray's, in 6 vols., 1888, newly collated with the MSS. in

the Bodleian.* The Oxford University Press, called, after its benefactor, the Clarendon Press, enjoys a monopoly (by Act of Parliament) of the production of the *History* in this country. Ranke and Gardiner pass interesting estimates upon Clarendon, and there is a most valuable survey of his Life in the *Dictionary of National Biography** by Professor Firth. A desirable edition of *The Life . . . in which is included A Continuation of his History of the Great Rebellion* is that printed at Oxford in 1827.

The inception of the Royal Society has been traced down to 1660 in a previous chapter. In 1661 a new era opened with the presidency of Sir Robert Moray and the membership of Charles II., who proposed some laughable experiments to his erudite associates. In 1662 the persevering philosophers were, through the King's grace and favour, incorporated by charter as the Royal Society of London for the Promotion of Natural Knowledge. The charter-book of the Society is one of the finest collections of autographs in the world. In 1655 the Society had gained the adhesion of the singular genius of Robert Hooke (1635—1703), who had already, we are told, invented thirty ways of flying, which he communicated to the warden of Wadham. In November, 1662, he was made curator of experiments, and the register testifies to the inconclusive eagerness with which he rushed from one inquiry to another—from respiration and falling bodies to telegraphy and diving-bells, and thence with ardour to meteorology. He measured the vibrations of a pendulum, 200 ft. long, attached to the steeple of St. Paul's; invented a useful machine for cutting the teeth of watch wheels; fixed the thermometrical zero at the freezing-point of water; and ascertained the number of vibrations corresponding to musical notes. This he explained on August 8th, 1666, to Pepys, who thought his "discourse in general mighty fine" but his pretensions "to tell how many strokes a fly makes with her wings" "a little too much refined." In 1665 was published his *Micrographia, or Some Physiological Descriptions of Minute Bodies*, a book full of ingenious ideas and singular anticipations. It contained the earliest investigations of the "fantastical colours" of thin plates, with a quasi-explanation by interference, the first notice of the "black spot" in soap-bubbles, and a theory of light as "a very short vibrative motion" transverse to straight lines of propagation through a "homogeneous medium." Heat was

defined as "a property of a body arising from the motion or agitation of its parts," and the real nature of combustion was pointed out in detail, eleven years before the publication of Mayow's similar discovery. Amongst other original ideas and anticipations of this fertile brain, it will suffice to mention the discourse on gravity containing the happy idea of measuring its force by the swinging of the pendulum, from which dates the clear idea of the mutual attraction of the heavenly bodies and of the planetary movements, though Hooke had not the mathematical ability to work out his theories. Similarly he devised an anemometer, divined the rotation of Jupiter, described the refraction of light, and invented a spiral spring to regulate the balance of watches; he also expounded the true theory of elasticity, suggested several new forms of barometer, and first stated the law of inverse squares. Aubrey gives a particular description of this extraordinary man: "He is but of middling stature, something crooked, pale faced, and his face but little belowe, but his head is lardge; his eie full and popping, and not quick; a grey eie. He haz a delicate head of hair, browne, and of an excellent moist curle. He is and ever was very temperate and moderate in dyet, etc. As he is of prodigious inventive head, so is he a person of great vertue and goodnes. Now when I have sayd his inventive faculty is so great, you cannot imagine his memory to be excellent, for they are like two bucketts, as one goes up the other goes downe. He is certainly the greatest mechanick this day in the world." John Flamsteed (1646—1719), the first Astronomer Royal, was a prominent member of the Society from 1680 to 1700. He owed his appointment and the foundation of the Observatory to the indignation of Charles II. that there were not better celestial maps in existence for the use of seamen. Overworked, ill, and, querulous though he was, Flamsteed achieved the most amazing results, his work with that of Hooke helping to bridge the gulf that separated Tycho Brahé from Newton. A contemporary and rival of Flamsteed during the early days of the Society, and one to whom the suggestion and encouragement of Newton's *Principia* was far more directly due, was Edmund Halley (1656—1742), the founder of cometary astronomy, still familiarly known through "Halley's comet." Another pillar of the Society, and one of the most robust inventive minds that a prolific age gave birth to, was John Wallis (1616—1703), who was educated at Felsted School, and was a predecessor of

Newton at Trinity, Cambridge. His *Arithmetica Infinitorum* (Oxford, 1655) was the most stimulating mathematical book that England so far had produced, and it contained the germs of the differential calculus. He also wrote a very interesting English grammar, and undertook with success to teach a deaf-mute to speak. In mathematical history Wallis was the greatest of Newton's precursors. An almost equally eminent group is formed by the botanical and zoological pioneers—Nehemiah Grew, William Derham, Francis Willoughby, and John Ray. Of the physicians and chemists of the mid-century, Sydenham and Mayow best deserve to rank among those in whom scientific knowledge was combined with imaginative insight. In "hydraulics," which then occupied such a large field in practical science, Sir Samuel Morland forms a link between the hazy conceptions of the Marquis of Worcester and our first practical engine-builder, Thomas Newcomen. But the reputation of all these pioneers in their several departments of scientific progress pales before that of John Ray (1627—1705), the first true systematist of the animal kingdom, as Cuvier called him—the greatest precursor of Buffon, Linnæus, Cuvier, and Darwin.

BOOK IV

SATIRE AND ESSAY

CHAPTER I

THE RESTORATION: SAMUEL BUTLER

"Between modern thought, on some at least of its more important sides, and the thought of men before the Restoration, there is a great gulf fixed. A political thinker in the present day would find it equally hard to discuss any point of statesmanship with Lord Burleigh or Oliver Cromwell. . . . But no gulf of this sort parts us from the men who followed the Restoration. Paley would have found no difficulty in understanding Tillotson; Newton and Sir Humphry Davy would have talked without a sense of severance. There would have been nothing to hinder a perfectly clear discussion on government or law between John Locke and Jeremy Bentham."—J. R. GREEN, *A Short History of the English People.*

Charles II. and English Literature—The birth of modern English prose—Samuel Butler—A master of rhyme and caricature.

THE gulf in thought and politics which separated the men of the Restoration from their ancestors who lived before the Puritan flood was almost equally marked in the domain of literature. The old English Renaissance, which had long been dying, now ceased to breathe, and a new departure in intellectual civilisation began. The great dislocation which had taken place in society created a singular insensibility among the wits of the new court to the great poets and dramatists of the Elizabethan age. Charles I. had been a devoted admirer of Shakespeare; but to Charles II. there was something insuperably archaic, old-fashioned,

and semi-barbaric about the dramatist whom his father and grandfather had delighted to honour. His impatience under the tirades of the Elizabethan drama is amusingly depicted in *Woodstock*. The personal influence of the restored monarch upon English letters was far from insignificant. "The King," says Burnet, "had little or no literature, but true and good sense, and had got a right notion of style, for he was in France at a time when they were much set on reforming their language. It soon appeared that he had a true taste." By this Burnet means that he approved a style which was pre-eminently clear, plain, and short. Everything had long pointed to the necessity of relieving English style by an importation of lucidity, brevity, and grace. Charles instinctively felt the lack of these qualities in our native literature. His travels had taught him that France was far ahead of his own country in these respects.

The royal influence is the more appreciable at this period, inasmuch as London more than ever dominated the world of letters while the court dominated London. The idea of the court became avowedly to assimilate its manners to those of the court of Versailles. It discarded almost all that remained of mediæval usage, and became a drawing-room in which, attracted to the throne by security, curiosity, amusement, and interest, the nobles, who are at the same time the chief patrons of letters, meet together and become at once men of the world and men of the court. The aims of such a society, which existed for selfish amusement, are fairly expressed by Etherege when he says: "A gentleman ought to dress well, dance well, fence well, have a talent for love-letters, a pleasant voice in a room, to be always very amorous, sufficiently discreet, but not too constant." Words take the place of deeds—a pleasant voice in a room. We cannot bawl, gesticulate, philosophise, or monologise in a drawing-room.

We learn to narrate concisely, to retail anecdotes, to criticise and to discuss. Life is passed in visits and conversations—the art of conversing becomes the chief of all. A clever comment is preferred to an imaginative creation. Wit temporarily quits the province of invention and settles down to criticism, for the purposes of which the long-windedness and exuberance of the old stylists are recognised as manifestly inappropriate. In order to wing a new flight and to cross the narrow seas our writers have to borrow a pinion from the light and dexterous prose of France.

Most of the transitional works of this period have proved as evanescent as the plays that heralded the great romantic drama of 1587, or the spurious battlements that heralded the Gothic revival of Pugin and Scott. Amidst all this welter of experiment the solitary form of Dryden stands like a solid isthmus between two seas, touching on the one hand the imagination and richness of the past, and on the other the calmer and more critical instincts of the succeeding generation. In one direction he looks not without experience over the great imaginative ocean of Tudor and Stuart literature. In the other he seems to survey in thought the yet untravelled waters of the eighteenth century—the world of reason, judgment, and science, of the calm serenity, unruffled optimism, and becoming temper of Berkeley and Addison, of Robertson and Hume, of Burke and of Reynolds. In Dryden we shall find all the most pregnant tendencies of the age epitomised. In him the poetical prose of the great tone-poets (such as Milton, Browne, and Taylor) was transmuted into the prosaic prose of everyday literature. The loss of picturesqueness was great, no doubt, but the gain in smooth living might be compared to the substitution of friction matches for the flint and steel of our forefathers.

The Restoration, says Matthew Arnold, marks the real

moment of birth of our modern prose. Prose's elder sister, Poetry, had suffered rather heavily from the redistribution of favours which commonly attends a birth in the family. For the time being her chief hope of holding her own seemed to depend upon her becoming as prosaic as possible. The new prose was not long in finding a congenial sphere of operations in the new field of criticism. Poetry, in consequence, turned its eyes in the same direction, and discovered the unexplored region of metrical satire. Prose expands from criticism into innumerable letters, memoirs, essays, and periodicals. Poetry approximates more and more to prose in substance, but is carefully differentiated from it in form by what comes to be known as poetic diction. As a variant from satire, it becomes copiously didactic, and is devoted to ungrateful tasks of translation and paraphrase: to descriptive inventories of the arts and sciences or to the descriptive enumeration, in the approved poetic diction of the day, of natural objects. In the sphere of the drama, the decline of the old romantic medley, a complete failure to appreciate such pieces as *The Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Much Ado about Nothing,* leads to more and more divergent results. Tragedy degenerates into the ranting of inflated heroics, of which the sound is monotonous and the sense almost wholly wanting. In this direction the influence of the court in encouraging an imitation of French models was far from beneficial. The comedy of the Restoration similarly borrowed everything from the comedy of France, save the poetry, the delicacy and the good taste which veiled its grossness. In it we get a perfect reflection of the licence which attended the reaction against Puritanism. The dramatists piqued themselves on the frankness and plain dealing which painted the world as they saw it—a world of brawls and assignations, of orgies at Mulberry or Spring Gardens, or fights with the watch, of lies and *double ententes,* of knaves

and dupes, of men who sold their daughters, and women who cheated their husbands.

Before we sail into the main current of Restoration literature in the wake of Dryden, we must stay to describe a derelict in the year of grace 1662, a poem unique in our literature, a strange compound of new wit and old learning, giving expression to the accumulated hatred of the Puritans which had become envenomed in the breasts of thousands during the time of the Commonwealth. The years of the Civil War and of the Republic had been an iron age for literature. For eighteen years there had been an interregnum in public taste—no theatres, no books except works of polemical divinity. Cowley and Denham had been exiled with their sovereign. Waller had remained dumb, and Milton had descended from Parnassus into the plain. The worst effects were seen later, in the barrenness of the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Meanwhile, the revenge of profane literature against its saintly oppressors found appropriate expression in a burlesque. Among burlesques, however, *Hudibras* stands alone.

Samuel Butler was the second son of Samuel Butler, a farmer and churchwarden of Strensham, in Worcestershire, where the poet was born and baptised in February, 1613. He was educated at Worcester Free School, and became a page in the family of Elizabeth, Countess of Kent, at a salary of £20 a year. In this household at Wrest, in Bedfordshire, he met the scholarly wit and handsome form of Selden, who did more than any teacher to form and mould his mind. He also studied painting, and is said to have painted a head of Oliver Cromwell from the life; but his pictures were so little esteemed in the eighteenth century that they were used in a windowless house to keep out the rain. He served in other families as clerk or attendant, and probably went abroad before 1659, when he published his first work, a prose tract in favour of the Stuarts. Next

year he married upon an appointment as secretary to the Earl of Carbery and steward of Ludlow Castle. He lived for some years mainly upon his wife's income, but this dwindled, owing to bad investment, and poor Butler grew progressively poorer.

Late in 1662 appeared a small anonymous volume entitled *Hudibras; the first part written in the time of the late wars.* It contained an unfinished burlesque in octosyllabic verse in three cantos, which, as Prior relates, were made known at court by the taste and influence of the Earl of Dorset. When it was known, says Johnson, it was necessarily admired; the King quoted, the courtiers studied, and the whole party of the Royalists applauded it. Every eye watched for the golden shower which was to fall upon the author, who certainly was not without his part in the general expectation. In 1664 the second part appeared; the curiosity of the nation was rekindled and the writer was again praised and elated. But praise was his whole reward. Clarendon says Wood gave him reason to hope for places and employments of value and credit, but no such advantages did he ever obtain. Oldham writes his famous lines of indignation:

> On Butler who can think without just rage,
> The glory and the scandal of his age.

The King was fond of giving *Hudibras* as a present to any new face at the court. Clarendon had a portrait of the author in his library over the chimney. Only Pepys could not see enough where the wit lies. But to this day, writes Aubrey, Butler has got *no* employment, only the King gave him . . . (£300?). "Memorandum: satyricall witts disoblige whom they converse with; and consequently make to themselves many enemies and few friends, and this was his manner and case." "He was of

a middle stature, strong sett, high coloured, a head of sorrell haire, a severe and sound judgment; a good fellow . . . sanguino cholerique, middle-sized, strong. He might have had preferments at first; but he would not except any but very good ones, so at last he had none at all and dyed in want." Wood says he was a boon witty companion; considering his reputation, however, we know remarkably little either of the man or his career. He brought out a third part of *Hudibras* in 1678, but left the poem still imperfect, with an abrupt ending. "Nor can it be thought strange," says Johnson, "that he should stop here, however unexpectedly. To write without reward is sufficiently unpleasing." In his last years we know that he was much troubled with gout, but he died of a consumption in Rose Street, Covent Garden, on September 25th, 1680, and was buried in St. Paul's, Covent Garden; "his feet touch the north wall." Aubrey, Shadwell, and Dr. Davenant were among his pall-bearers. The monument in the Abbey was put up by Lord Mayor Barber in 1721.

Of the *Genuine Remains* (ed. Thyer, 1759) collected and published many years after Butler's death, the most notable are *The Elephant in the Moon,* a skit on the Royal Society, a Dialogue of Cat and Puss ridiculing the heroic plays, and 120 brilliant "Characters" after the pattern of Overbury, Fuller, and Earle. These abound in strokes of shrewdness, sarcasm, and wit such as one might expect from the author of the best burlesque poem in the language. Read especially his sketch of *A Small Poet,* in which, while the pattern is modelled upon Earle, there is not a little anticipatory of the stronger saturnine humour of Swift.

Suggestions from the masterpiece of Cervantes and from Ariosto supply the substratum of Butler's burlesque. He is a cynic and he can see little in the religious and political professions of the Puritan but a mask for cant and greed.

Sir Hudibras (Presbyterian) and his squire Ralpho (Independent) represent the odious types of self-seeking "saints" whom Butler had had the ill-fortune to come across and the penetration to see through.

As a master of rhyme Butler stands high and anticipates the feats of such successors as Swift, Cowper, Hood, Calverley, Browning, Gilbert, and Seaman. As a king of caricature and of rigmarole he carries us back to John Skelton, and as with Skelton the octosyllabic measure, with its terrible facility, continually carries him off on its back and he seems to be degenerating into one of the primitive gleemen, rambling interminably into incoherent and irrelevant detail. The lack of measure, and form and progress about the poem is typically and aggravatingly English.

That Butler's octosyllabics are overdone to the point of monotony and that his jokes are often tasteless while the form of the whole piece is chaotic—all this may not be denied. There is enough filth to remind a great French critic of Rabelais, and enough buffoonery and tiresome caricatured description to recall Scarron at his worst. But there is a fitness and a flavour about Butler's phrasing, terse in its mother-wit for all the writer's incorrigible rambling, which a foreign critic, however eminent, could hardly be expected fully to appreciate. And there is a good deal more in Butler of such qualities as need be concealed from no man.

There is a genuine satiric impulse about all that he wrote. He may not have been an enthusiast for virtue, loyalty, or religion. He seems, in fact, to have had a sufficiently low opinion of human nature. But a real indignation accompanied the insight which enables him to penetrate the disguises which roguery, hypocrisy, and self-seeking cant are so especially prone to assume during revolutionary times; and there is little doubt that the mixture of cynicism and farce which animates the doggerel of *Hudibras* was much better adapted to stir the age of

Charles II. than the lofty scorn of a Burke. There is, too, amongst the wit and satire, learning and buffoonery, a vein of a very rich humour. Hudibras and his squire Ralpho set out to put down a bear-baiting, not for compassion towards the bear, but from hatred of amusement *qua* amusement, and they express their views of each other's doctrinal peculiarities with a frankness which is wholly to the advantage of the inquiring reader.[1]

It is a mistake to suppose, as Taine did, that *Hudibras* was universally appreciated in its own day. Mr. Pepys bought it twice or more in the hope of being able to discover the pointed humour of it, yet apparently failing; and there is this amount of truth about his strictures, that *Hudibras,* like most epics, comic or otherwise, is relished to-day only in brief extracts. Sir Conan Doyle has made an effective use of it in this fashion in his story of *Micah Clarke.* Despite the rudeness and clever schoolboy buffoonery of which Taine in his most donnish humour so acidly complains, a book the wit and wisdom of which is crystallised into so many imperishable quotations can never be wholly forgotten.

[1] See the passage commencing:

> "Presbytery doth but translate
> The Papacy to a free state;
> A commonwealth of popery
> Where ev'ry village is a see."

There is a famous annotated edition of *Hudibras* by Dr. Zachary Grey (the 3 volume edition of 1819 is, perhaps, the best), and there are modern editions by Robert Bell (1855) and Brimley Johnson (1893). The text has been edited for the Cambridge English Classics by A. R. Waller, 1905. No one who is interested should fail to read the enlivening chapter on the Restoration in Taine's great book on English Literature. Dr. Garnett's entertaining *Age of Dryden,* Barrett Wendell's *Temper of the Seventeenth Century* (1904), and Beljame's *Le Public et les Hommes de Lettres en Angleterre* (1881), are also to be consulted.

CHAPTER II

DRYDEN AND THE RESTORATION DRAMA

"But at whatever period of his life we look at Dryden, and whatever, for the moment, may have been his poetic creed, there was something in the nature of the man that would not be wholly subdued to what it worked in. There are continual glimpses of something in him greater than he, hints of possibilities finer than anything he has done."—LOWELL, *My Study Windows.*

"By placing his readers on the same level as himself, Dryden freed criticism of its didactic character; and by recognising that there were different methods and principles in literature, and by investigating them and weighing their merits, he established comparative criticism. Moreover, as a consequence of these changes, he raised criticism to the dignity of an art, and established it as a distinct literary form. And for these reasons he is worthy to be called, in the words of his great successor in the eighteenth century, 'the father of English criticism.'"—*Introduction to Dryden's Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (ed. D. NICHOL SMITH).

John Dryden—Early poems—Comedies—Heroic tragedies—Satires—Fables—Critical essays—Congreve—Otway—Nat Lee and Nicholas Rowe.

JOHN DRYDEN was born at Aldwinkle All Saints (the home of old Tom Fuller) in Northamptonshire in the early part of August, 1631. His grandfather, Erasmus Dryden, of Canons Ashby, high sheriff of Northamptonshire, was created a baronet in the seventeenth year of James I.; but the poet's father was a younger son who married in 1630 Mary, a granddaughter of Sir Gilbert Pickering. Dryden was admitted as a scholar at Westminster under Busby, and passed thence to Trinity College,

Cambridge, in 1650. Dryden's father died in 1654 and left a small estate at Blakesley to his son. Apart from the few school exercises and translations, the death of Cromwell was the first subject of the young poet's muse:

> His grandeur he derived from Heaven alone,
> For he was great, ere Fortune made him so;
> And wars, like mists that rise against the sun,
> Made him but greater seem, not greater grow.

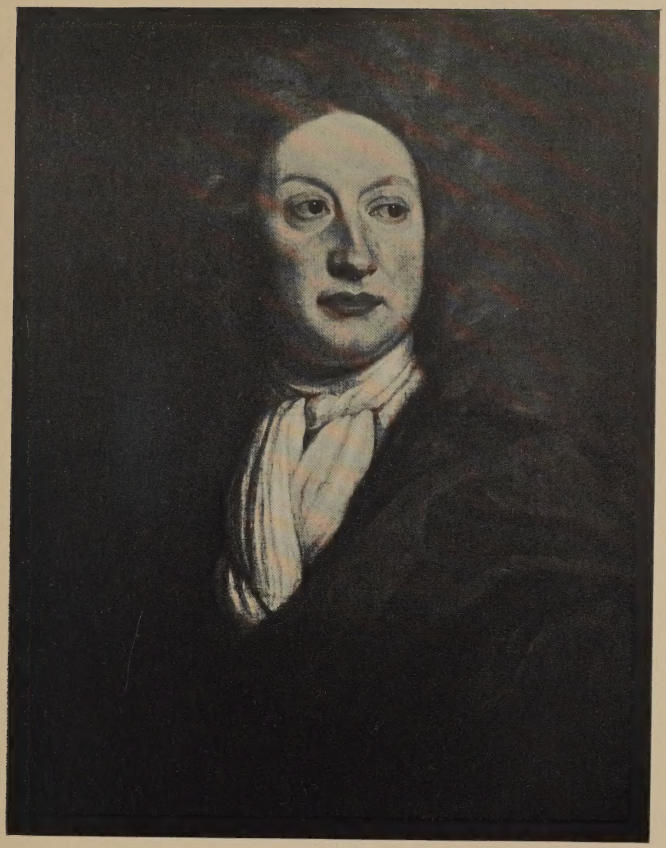
After the Restoration this piece fell into a state of oblivion, from which it may be believed that the author, who had seen a new light in politics, was by no means anxious to recall it. His very next publications, in fact, were the *Astræa Redux,* celebrating the Restoration, and a panegyric upon the King's coronation. On leaving Cambridge Dryden seems to have lodged with Herringman, a bookseller of the New Exchange, who published his books down to 1679. His election to the Royal Society in 1662 cemented a connection with many of the learned men of the time. His literary activity at this time was not great, but he took the important step of securing a patron in the person of Sir Robert Howard, whose sister, Lady Elizabeth Howard, he married on December 1st, 1663. At the time of his marriage he had already experienced failure on the boards of the King's Theatre with the flimsy comedy *The Wild Gallant* (February, 1663), and a modified success with a tragi-comedy, *The Rival Ladies,* which appeared eight or nine months later. Alike in their foreign origin, their rhymed verse, and their coarseness, these pieces were deliberately aimed at tickling the jaded and sceptical palate of the newly returned court.

Dryden's pointed preference for rhyme and his rejection of dramatic blank verse were the occasion of the first of his critical controversies, to which we shall have to refer a little later on. In the meantime his position as a

dramatist was established by two splendidly mounted plays, *The Indian Queen* and *The Indian Emperor,* brought out at the King's Theatre during 1664-5. In the first of these plays, his brother-in-law, Sir Robert Howard, had a large share. During the disastrous years of the Plague and the Great Fire, Dryden seems to have stayed with his father-in-law, Lord Berkshire, at Charlton, in Wiltshire. It was during this period that he composed in elegiac quatrains his notable poem, *Annus Mirabilis,* in which his descriptive power and the fluent energy of his style are first characteristically developed. The poem in its general conception bears a considerable resemblance to the *Pharsalia* of Lucan. With the reopening of the theatres in 1667, Dryden again became active as a playwright. On March 2nd, 1667, Nell Gwynn first fascinated the town in Dryden's comedy of *Secret Love, or The Maiden Queen.* This was followed in the autumn by his highly successful adaptation of Molière's *L'Etourdi* called *Sir Martin Mar-all.* A month later appeared Dryden and Davenant's joint adaptation of Shakespeare's *Tempest,* the prologue to which, in a finely written tribute to Shakespeare from Dryden's pen, enshrines the lines:

> But Shakespeare's magic could not copied be;
> Within that circle none durst walk but he.

Dryden now entered into a contract with the King's Theatre to supply them with plays at the rate of three a year. As playwright in ordinary to the company he drew a stipend of over £300 per annum. But the actual rate of production was little more than one play yearly. In August, 1670, his appointment as Poet Laureate must have brought up his income to nominally well over £600 a year, but his salary was irregularly paid, and Dryden



FROM THE PAINTING BY G. KNELLER

JOHN DRYDEN

seems to have been free at no time from anxieties on the score of income.

Of Dryden's comedies during this period several owed their success primarily to their licence; in the special sense of comedy or in the gaiety of humour which can stimulate it, Dryden cannot be said to have excelled. The most striking of his plays from 1669 onwards are not the comedies but the heroic tragedies, commencing with *Tyrannic Love* and *The Conquest of Granada* and ending with *Aurungzebe, or The Great Mogul.* Several of these are dignified by rant, and by stilted heroics which Dryden himself would gladly have seen burned. Some of these traits were notably caricatured in the Duke of Buckingham's famous farce, *The Rehearsal.* The poet Bayes of this farce was Dryden; a number of passages in his plays were parodied, his favourite phrases freely used, his dress and manners mercilessly imitated on the boards of his own theatre. Bayes was first designed to represent Davenant, Dryden's predecessor as Laureate; but after Davenant's death in 1668 and the transference of the laurel to Dryden the latter became the main object of attack, and Bayes became his nickname for ever after. It is evident that the skit was a long time in preparation, and Buckingham, who was the ostensible author, is said to have gone for aid to the author of *Hudibras,* to Sprat, and Martin Clifford, Master of Charterhouse, and great pains were taken in coaching the actor Lacy in Dryden's eccentricities of manner. The result seems hardly commensurate with such a combination of talent, but it had an immense success in its own day. Dryden himself seems to have taken the assault with admirable humour; but he did not spare Buckingham when he found it safe to assail him a few years later, and gibbeted him for ever in that inimitable sketch of Zimri in the first part of *Absalom and*

Achitophel, published just ten years after the provocation of *The Rehearsal.*[1]

The next ten years were mainly devoted to the production of plays, the stage commending itself to Dryden as being still the one paying branch of his profession as author. To his phlegmatic and argumentative mind there was no especial attraction in the traffic of the stage, and he adopted the means of cajoling his audiences which came readiest to his hands. In his comedies he was as ready to appeal to the town's love of indecency as in his dramas he appealed to their political prejudice, or in his tragedies to their singular love of bombast, while for their praise and blame in general he showed little more respect than was shown by Henry Fielding half a century later. Two typical comedies were produced in 1672, *The Marriage à la Mode* (which after the two adaptations *Sir Martin Mar-all* and *Amphitryon,* is the most successful of all his comedies) and *The Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery,* which most deservedly failed in spite of its provocative title. Another comedy, *The Kind Keeper, or Mr. Limberham,* was withdrawn after three days on the score of offensiveness. In 1667 Dryden produced *Amboyna, or The Cruelties of the Dutch to the English Merchants,* an inflammatory drama designed to gratify the anti-Dutch feeling of the hour. In a similar manner he took advantage of the Popish plot, by a play named *The Spanish Friar, or The Double Discovery,* performed in 1681. It is a bitter attack upon the hypocrisy and licentiousness attributed

[1] "In the first rank of these did Zimri stand,
A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one but all mankind's epitome:
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was everything by starts and nothing long;
But in the course of one revolving moon
Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon."

to the Catholic priesthood. A more singular performance was *The State of Innocence,* an opera which is founded upon Milton's *Paradise Lost* (published 1669). Aubrey states that Dryden asked Milton's permission to put his poem into rhyme, and that Milton replied, "Ah! you may tag my verses if you will." In the preface Dryden speaks of *Paradise Lost* as "one of the greatest, most noble, and sublime poems which either this age or nation hath produced." The admiration was lasting. Richardson, in his notes to *Paradise Lost,* tells the story to the effect that Dryden said to Lord Buckhurst, "This man cuts us all out, and the ancients too."

But Dryden's most characteristic works during his dramatic period were his heroic tragedies. They were called heroic because they were written in language elevated above nature, and exhibited passion in a state of maniacal ecstasy; but their chief distinction in the history of English literature is the fact that they were written in rhyming couplets. The example, it is true, had been set to some extent by Davenant, but the great exponent of rhyming tragedy both in theory and practice is Dryden himself. The new fashion was largely due to Charles II., who brought back from France confirmed views as to the propriety of rhyme, the observance of the unities, and the limitation of the tragic stage to personages of exalted rank. The most famous of these rhymed plays were *The Conquest of Granada* and *Aurungzebe.* This use of rhyme, so necessary to the rhythm of French verse, gives a monotony and a regularity to English drama entirely destructive to the free play of the national genius in poetry. The experiment of Dryden has consequently never been repeated, and except for the fifteen years or so which followed the Restoration the use of rhymed couplets has been confined on the stage either to prologues and epilogues, or to short salvoes specially designed to mark the fall of the cur-

tain. In the last and best of his rhyming tragedies, *Aurungzebe,* he expresses his determination to return to the form of verse which had been used with such success by the old masters, and no longer to make its sense a slave of syllables. The result was seen in his fine blank-verse tragedy, *All for Love,* on the theme of *Antony and Cleopatra,* which was brought out at the King's Theatre early in 1678. The ambition of the play suggests that Dryden proposed, as an English Corneille, to rival Shakespeare himself. If so, the result is a magnificent failure. From a French point of view the dignity of the play is seriously compromised by the unseemly squabble between Octavia and Cleopatra. Yet for strength and dignity combined no dramatic writing of Dryden approaches the first and last acts of *All for Love.* The scene between the devoted veteran Ventidius and his wayward master with its delicate fluctuations of feeling is unquestionably superb.

It was in 1681, after a long interval of almost exclusively dramatic work, in the course of which his technique had matured in a semi-miraculous manner, that Dryden resumed the series of his political poems with his famous *Absalom and Achitophel,* the first of English political satires in verse. The occasion was the restless scheming of Shaftesbury and the country party against the court, and more especially the determination of Charles that the succession should take its legitimate course, and should not be diverted from his brother James to his illegitimate son Monmouth. The situation was much aggravated by the attempts of unscrupulous Whigs to excite the London mob by preposterous fictions as to the designs of the Pope and the Jesuits against our Protestant land. The plan of the satire was not new to the public. A Catholic poet had in 1679 paraphrased the scriptural story of Naboth's vineyard and applied it to the condemnation of Lord Stafford

on account of the Popish Plot. Neither was the application of the story of *Absalom and Achitophel* to the persons of Monmouth and Shaftesbury first made by Dryden. A prose paraphrase published in 1680 had already been composed upon this allusion. But the vigour, the happy adaptation not only of the incidents but of the very names of individuals characterised, the glowing force of these characterisations, and the masterly vigour of the metre, in which each verse serves as a stroke and ends with a lash, gave Dryden's poem a novelty of effect which has rarely been surpassed. The depreciation of Shaftesbury is precisely as effective as it could be made without conspicuous exaggeration. The character of Absalom seems exactly made for the feebly aspiring and invertebrate Monmouth.

The success of the poem was so great that the court once more turned to Dryden for his assistance when it required satirical capital to be made out of the acquittal of Shaftesbury by a grand jury upon a charge of high treason. The Whigs celebrated the event by striking a medal with a motto "Lætamur," and in March, 1682, Dryden published *The Medal,* a satire against sedition, in which he retouched and re-emphasised his unflattering profile of the Whig leader, and once more drew upon himself the vituperation of a nameless crowd of Whig scribblers. Rather more formidable, however, was the assault upon Tory bards by Dryden's chief dramatic adversary, Thomas Shadwell, in a lampoon called *The Medal of John Bayes.* Dryden retaliated in the autumn of 1682 in a strenuous personal lampoon called *MacFlecknoe,* upon the form of which he expended so much elaboration that it served as a perfect model for *The Dunciad* and all its derivative burlesques. Richard Flecknoe, an Irish poetaster, is represented as dying full of years in 1678, and as justly bequeathing his

absolute power over the realms of nonsense to the most accomplished of all his heirs:

> Shadwell alone of all my sons is he
> Who stands confirmed in full stupidity,
> The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
> But Shadwell never deviates into sense.

The ancient monarch had just time to draw up the protocol for his successor's coronation when he was lowered, still declaiming, down a trap:

> Sinking, he left his drugget robe behind,
> Borne upwards by a subterranean wind;
> The mantle fell to the young prophet's part,
> With double portion of his father's art.

The assault was followed up by an, if possible, still more robust buffeting of Shadwell and Settle as Og and Doeg in the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel,* which came out in November, 1682, and was mainly the work of Nahum Tate, but was so devised as to work off the aftermath of Dryden's satirical harvest in this peculiar field—that, namely, of the faction-fights between the petitioners and abhorrers from 1678 to 1682.

Dryden's next great poem was in the nature of a striking contrast to these masculine but somewhat brutalising satires. It was an argument for the faith of the Church of England as the *via tutissima* between deism and popery, to which he gave the name of *Religio Laici.* It seems as if his thoughts having been directed to the claims of rival creeds, his mind was already hankering after an infallible Church. If this be so, his conversion to Roman Catholicism in the course of the next four years was the result primarily not of an opportunism without scruple, but of a normal process of religious evolution from the

period in 1682 when his mind seems to have been first seriously directed towards religious speculation. This line of defence in regard to Dryden's conversion, against the malice of his enemies, was maintained with brilliant success by no less an advocate than Sir Walter Scott. It need not prevent us from acknowledging that the precise manner and season of Dryden's conversion were influenced by a desire to ingratiate himself with James II., or that his new religious manifesto, *The Hind and the Panther,* which was published in 1687, nearly five years after *Religio Laici,* was issued with a view of conciliating the King rather than unburdening his own conscience in regard to the variations in its creed. Both works take a very high place among Dryden's poems, as examples of that wonderful art of reasoning in rhyme in which Dryden was scarcely rivalled by Lucretius. *The Hind and the Panther* naturally excited a good deal of clamour against the author. Two young men destined to fame, Matt Prior and Charles Montague, wrote a parody of it in *The Town and Country Mouse.* The inconsistencies between the new poem and *Religio Laici* were pointed out by industrious pamphleteers, but little heed was paid to the fault which first strikes the modern reader—namely, the grotesque character of the imagery that represents a hind and a panther discoursing at length in couplets upon nice points of theology and Church discipline, while a subaltern allegory represents Father Petre as a martin and the clergy of the Church of England as doves! The court, however, was perfectly satisfied, the piece went through four editions tion of *The Life of François Xavier,* which was issued during 1687, and Dryden was set to work upon a transla- by Tonson with a dedication to the Queen in 1688.

In 1687 appeared the first, and, just ten years later, the second, more famous *Ode in Honour of St. Cecilia's Day,* written to music and celebrating the triumphs of the art,

the method employed being a parable describing Alexander the Great's feast in the royal halls of Persepolis, and the effect of Timotheus's harping upon the conqueror's passions; in 1687 also his memorial verses to Anne Killigrew, a noble example of a poem written to commission. Far less pleasing in effect is the official panagyric on the birth of the Prince of Wales in June, 1688, in which the Laureate adopts an ultra-Byzantine posture of adulatory rapture. His flowery predictions were cruelly falsified by the event. The impending revolution naturally gave the death-blow to Dryden's hopes of political place or advancement. The Government which restored Titus Oates to freedom and estate could not be insensible to the "honesty" and merit of Thomas Shadwell, another sufferer in the Whig cause. Dryden's pension was promptly transferred to Tom, and the late Laureate bent prudently and patiently to the storm which he could not resist. To his great honour Dryden grappled with the situation with all the sturdy tenacity of his lymphatic temperament, and in the same spirit which Scott afterwards displayed under similar circumstances. He may probably have reformed his system of living, which can hardly have been other than extravagant. Certain it is that if he could not entirely keep out of debt, he at least kept out of disgrace, and that the years which followed his apparent ruin, if not the brilliant part of his life, were the most honourable and honoured. Debarred from the sunshine of court favour, Dryden naturally turned once more to the theatre, though he always regarded his dramatic work as second best. Yet the two plays that he produced in 1690 proved two of the most vital that ever came from his pen. These were *Don Sebastian,* one of the stateliest of his declamatory dramas, containing a once famous scene (Act IV.) between Sebastian and Dorax, and *Amphitryon,* the most humorous of his

adaptations (from Plautus through Molière). The later efforts of the veteran playwright were not so fortunate; *Cleomenes* (1692) was very coldly received, and his last play, *Love Triumphant* (1694), was a deplorable failure.

More congenial and more distinctive work remained for Dryden to do in the sphere of translation and paraphrase, and his chief publications between 1693 and his death were *The Satires of Juvenal and Persius,* translated into English verse, 1693; *The Works of Virgil,* translated into English verse, July, 1697; and *Fables Ancient and Modern,* translated into verse from Homer, Ovid, Boccace (Boccaccio), and Chaucer, 1700. The first of these volumes gave a foretaste merely of Dryden's power and method as a translator. Dryden was a very great metrist and a very great rhetorician, but he was no great Latinist, and he had none of the space and leisure which is indispensable to really scholarly accomplishment. Like most of his work, therefore, his translation bears the impress of his necessities; but so sublime a journeyman was Dryden, so true is it that "his chariot wheels grew hot with driving," that his versions and fables have always ranked among the greatest and most original of his works, and as among the very finest specimens of literary paraphrase in any language. It is good to relate that these versions were warmly welcomed and richly remunerated by the poet's contemporaries.

When his *Fables* appeared, Dryden was an old man, and had suffered a long time with gout and gravel. On April 30th, 1700, *The Postboy* announced that "John Dryden, Esq., the famous poet, lies a-dying." His death was not delayed. The amputation of his leg, which was gangrened, might have saved his life, but Dryden chose rather to resign it; and on Wednesday, May 1st, at three o'clock in the morning, he died at his own house, 43, Gerrard Street, Soho, whither he had moved from Long Acre in 1686.

His body was embalmed, and upon Garth's application was deposited "in state" at the College of Physicians. On May 13 (after private burial in St. Anne's, Soho) he was honoured with a public funeral more imposing than English poet had ever received. He was buried in Westminster Abbey by the side of Chaucer and Cowley, near Spenser and Jonson, in "Poets' Corner." His monument there was uncovered in January, 1721.

For a long time Dryden had occupied the presidential chair in the republic of letters. And his authority was at least as unquestioned as that of Sam Johnson seventy, or that of Victor Hugo a hundred and forty, years later.[1] He was moreover, by general consent, the best prose writer and the best poet of his own day, and, down to our own, he is still in many opinions the best prose writer among poets, and the best poet among prose writers. It is a singular fact that when literary authorities were amusing themselves, a score of years ago, in drawing up lists of the hundred best writers, the name of Dryden was wholly omitted, and that the omission was pointed out by a layman as regards literary criticism—to wit, his present Majesty, King Edward VII. Before an international

[1] Pepys first met Dryden in the wits' room at Will's Coffee House (1, Bow Street, Covent Garden) as early as 1663, and there the poet was still to be seen thirty years later, with his Chaucerian "down look," his snuffy waistcoat, and his florid but unimpressive countenance. Round his armchair, placed near the fire in winter, and out on the balcony in summer, hung delighted listeners—gay young templars, eager to hear the reminiscences of one who could recall roistering suppers with Etherege and Sedley, and Attic evenings with Waller and Cowley and Davenant; who could remember the wit-combats between Charles and Killigrew and the sallies of Nell Gwynn, when she was still mixing strong water for the gentlemen;—students from Oxford and Cambridge who had quitted their books to catch a glimpse of the English Juvenal;—clever lads about town, ambitious for a pinch from his snuff-box, which

tribunal it may well be doubted whether Dryden would obtain a hearing among the first hundred or even two hundred authors, but where the judges were all Englishmen a poet so characteristically English seemed rather strangely overlooked; yet the strangeness is rather apparent than real, for few writers of Dryden's reputation are so little beloved—so little realised as a man, so little read as an author. People take him on trust, as, indeed, they take most of the literature of his period. Dryden's endowment is, in fact, of the kind which appeals much more to the literary craftsman than to the literary explorer. He shows little creative power, no profound intuition, his inventive gifts are far from striking. The success of his reputation has been to some extent adventitious. He owed the survival of his influence largely to the discipleship of Pope, which was due in no small measure to the accident that both were Catholics. The key thus struck by Pope was maintained during the critical period owing to the enthusiasm of Johnson, Charles Fox, and Sir Walter Scott.

Dryden's most genuine success was achieved by the application of vigorous heroic couplets to the novel purposes of religious argument and keen political

was, as we are told, equal to a degree in the Academy of Wit;—pleasant humorists, "honest Mr. Swan" the punster, Tom D'Urfey, Browne, and old Sir Roger L'Estrange; men distinguished for their skill in art or science, whom his fame had attracted thither, Ratcliffe, Kneller, and poor Closterman. There were those, who, like himself, had achieved high literary distinction, but who were nevertheless proud to acknowledge him their teacher—Wycherley, Southerne, Congreve, and Vanbrugh; Thomas Creech, whose edition of Lucretius had placed him in the front rank of English scholars; William Walsh, "the best critic in the nation"; George Stepney, whose juvenile poems had made grey authors blush; young Colley Cibber, flushed with the success of his first comedy; and Samuel Garth, whose admirable mock-heroic poem is even now not forgotten.

satire. This, his gradually developed art of verse narrative, and his extraordinary technical skill in every branch of his profession, have gained for him his position, that not merely of the literary representative of his age, but of one of the chief pivots in the theory of literary development from Chaucer's time to the present. It is noteworthy that Dryden went on improving to the very last, not only as a playwright and songster, but also as a versifier and critic. At the end of his career he was a perfect master of every literary weapon of which his age comprehended the use. Of his plays it might perhaps be said (as Johnson said of *Irene*) that it is useless to criticise what nobody reads. Dryden turned to Drama as a *gagnepain.* The perceptive insight and synthetic imagination which it demands were by no means his strong points. As regards the critical essays or Examens, in which the Gallic model was improved upon, it is far otherwise.

Dryden's critical writings, says Mr. Ker, have been less damaged by the lapse of time, and have kept their original freshness better than any literary discourses which can be compared with them. "Every one of his essays contains some independent judgment; his love of literature was instinctive. His mind answered at once to the touch of poetry, and gave in return his estimate of it in the other harmony of prose. There is nothing in literary criticism more satisfactory, merely as a display of literary strength and skill, than the essays in which Dryden's mind is expatiating freely, as in the *Dramatic Poesy* and the preface to the *Fables* where he faces his adversaries, personal and impersonal, with the security of a man who has confidence in his own powers and in the clearness of his eye. He is at his best when he has set himself to try the

There too were occasionally to be seen those younger men who were to carry on the work he was so soon to lay down, and who were to connect two great ages of English literature.

value of dogmatic rules and principles—cautious, respectful, seeming to comply with them, till the time comes for the stroke that ends the encounter, and leaves the arena to be cleared for the next antagonist."

As a critic Dryden was primarily occupied with the critical topics of his day. He treats of the heroic poem and of the characteristics which should distinguish it; he expatiates upon "Nature" and the duty of following it; he dilates upon the merits and relative functions of rhyme and blank verse; he discourses upon the unities; he discusses the critical dicta of his predecessors such as Ben Jonson; he insists upon the unchartered excellence of the older English poetry and drama (Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Fletcher); his appreciation of Shakespeare and Jonson is both enthusiastic and expert; he defines wit as a propriety or congruity of thoughts and words; he supports the moderns against the ancients in the great battle of which the first skirmishes were witnessed just before the Restoration.

Dryden's prose essay of *Dramatic Poesy,* written in 1665, touched up two years later and published in 1668, was his first great outstanding work; with the preface to the *Fables* it remains the liveliest and the most stimulating of all his essays. A *compte rendu* of the dramatic theories of the day, it is the first example of comparative English criticism—a criticism genial in manner and not addressed over the heads of the public to a starched bench of scholars, but challenging an open verdict from the literary world at large. His characters of Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Ben Johnson are models of happy and discriminating criticism; Neander's defence of rhyme is a masterpiece of ingenious reasoning. Excellent as it is, however, Dryden's critical power is seen in an even more favourable light in his introduction to the *Fables* of 1700, in which he sets forth his views of Chaucer, Ovid,

and Boccaccio. He also expresses a noble contrition for the faults of taste in his plays, while uttering a dignified protest against the unmannerly zeal of Jeremy Collier's attack upon the drama and everything connected therewith.

For the last word in appreciation of Dryden's prose, and one that comprehends practically everything that may most fitly be said, we draw upon one of the most felicitous passages in what is perhaps the finest essay in Dr. Johnson's best book: "Criticism, either didactic or defensive, occupies almost all his prose, except those pages which he has devoted to his patrons; but none of his prefaces were ever thought tedious. They have not the formality of a settled style in which the first half of the sentence betrays the other. The clauses are never balanced, nor the periods modelled; every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid; the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous; what is little, is gay; what is great, is splendid. He may be thought to mention himself too frequently; but while he forces himself upon our esteem, we cannot refuse him to stand high in his own. Everything is excused by the play of images and the spriteliness of expression. Though all is easy, nothing is feeble; though all seems careless, there is nothing harsh; and though since his earlier works more than a century has passed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obsolete."

After the heroic plays of Dryden, *The Mourning Bride* of Congreve and the *Venice Preserved* of Otway occupy the first place in traditional repute as far as this genre is concerned. Congreve's one tragedy, produced in 1697, is chiefly remembered now for its opening verses:

> Music has charms to soothe the savage breast,
> To soften rocks, or bend a knotted oak,

and for the passage describing a cathedral, which John-

son with extravagant praise lauded beyond any poetical passage in the whole of the English drama. The play certainly reveals a tragic power in Congreve which is not wholly absent even from some of his comedies, such as *The Double Dealer;* yet the verse as a whole is deplorably stilted, and Congreve is sadly hampered by the formality in the French style, or rather an affectation of it in which a semblance of fine writing has to do duty for true passion and genuine feeling. Yet "paltry as it is when compared, we do not say with *Lear* or *Macbeth,* but with the best dramas of Massinger and Ford, *The Mourning Bride* stands very high among the tragedies of the age in which it was written," and it undoubtedly proved one of the most sucessful dramas of its day. The part of Almeria remained popular until the eighteenth century was well advanced. If the tragedy were revived now, says Leigh Hunt, the audience would laugh at its inflated sentences and unconscious prose.

Thomas Otway, son of the Rev. Humphrey Otway, was born on March 3rd, 1652, at Trotton, near Midhurst, and was educated at Winchester and Christ Church. But the prospect of a living was cut away from him, and we find him in London in 1671 poor and needy. In 1675 he produced his boyish play *Alcibiades,* and this led to Rochester taking him up under the delusive hope that he had at last discovered a serious rival to Dryden. Under such auspices he produced his rhymed tragedy of *Don Carlos,* the success of which may have temporarily annoyed Dryden. This was followed in 1680 by *Caius Marius,* a grotesque adaptation from *Romeo and Juliet.* In the meantime, despairing of any substantial gain from the patronage of Rochester, whose jealousy was excited by his philandering with Mrs. Barry, Otway served two campaigns in Flanders. His talent seems to have been invigorated in some way, for, in the same year that he produced the wretched travesty of

Caius Marius, he first showed his remarkable gift of declamation and stage pathos in *The Orphan,* a sensational play of some power, for which hints were obviously derived from *The Two Noble Kinsmen, A King and No King,* and *Cymbeline,* though by such a talent as Otway's the conceptions of a Fletcher or a Shakespeare could not fail to be vulgarised, coarsened, and de-supernaturalised. In 1682, from Saint Réal's classical and mainly imaginary narrative of the *Conjuration de Venise,* Otway derived the colour and setting for his ambitious tragedy of *Venice Preserved.* Full of sublimated rant and spurious pathos, *Venice Preserved* is fitted only for the garish light of the theatre.

The closing scenes of Otway's life (April, 1685) are more pathetic than any of his dramas. He made £100 each at least by the most successful of these; but his manners were extravagant, and he gamed and drank away large sums. One day he went into a coffee-house in a starving condition and begged a shilling of a gentleman, who, distressed at his wretched state, gave him a guinea. Otway rushed off to a baker's shop, bought a roll, and was choked while rapidly swallowing the first mouthful. Pathetic in this connection are the words of Wood (originally used of George Peele) as cited by Dr. Birkbeck Hill: "When or where he died I cannot tell; for so it is and alway hath been, that most poets die poor and consequently obscurely, and a hard matter it is to trace them to their graves."

The career of Nathaniel Lee affords a curious parallel to that of Otway. He was well educated at Westminster and Trinity, Cambridge, but his career was blighted by early dissipation and an excessive fondness for the stage, complicated in his case by a strain of insanity. In the intervals of Bedlam and intoxication he wrote *The Rival Queens* (Roxana and Statira), *or Alexander* (1677), an old stage favourite, in blank verse, and another successful

tragedy, *Mithridates,* in the following year. In two plays, *Œdipus* and *The Duke of Guise,* in which Shaftesbury was attacked, he collaborated with Dryden. Lee's habitual rant mounts occasionally almost into the regions of the Marlowesque. He was almost persuaded to be a poet. Unfortunately, as in the somewhat similar case of Christopher Smart, it is very difficult to distinguish his tumidity from sheer lunacy. There could not be so much smoke without a certain amount of fire, and so we may perhaps allow with Addison that there is "infinite fire" but greatly "involved." As with Otway, poor Lee died a piteous death, the details of which are diversely given. He got lost in the snow and died of exposure, but whether he was a fugitive from the mad-house or a strayed reveller from some tavern is a disputed point. He was buried in the parish church of St. Clement Danes on May 6th, 1692.

In Southerne, Rowe, and Lillo we get into lower and lower strata of "heroic" tragedy. Thomas Southerne was born in the year of the Restoration at Oxmantown, near Dublin, and studied at Trinity College, Dublin; but came to England in 1678, and enrolled himself at the Middle Temple as a student of law. He won the esteem of Dryden, who wrote a prologue for his *Loyal Brother* (1682, a compliment to the Duke of York), was friendly with Pope, and lived to become acquainted with Gray. He is said to have fought on the winning side at Sedgmoor. He was certainly a Nestor among playwrights, and wrote two plays which proved wholly to the taste of the ages of Pope and Johnson. *Isabella, or The Fatal Marriage* (1694) was based upon Aphra Behn's romance of *The Nun. Oroonoko* (1696) is similarly based upon the novel by Mrs. Behn. Both plays are didactic, *Isabella* denouncing paternal partiality and *Oroonoko* the horrors of the slave trade. "Respected as a relic of the past, a decorous church-goer with silver hair, Southerne lived

far into the eighteenth century (1746), and came sufficiently under its influences to repent his mingling of tragic and comic action in the same piece; which indeed he had reason to regret, not because he had done it, but because he had not done it better."

Nicholas Rowe was one of Busby's pupils at Westminster, and entered, after he left school, at the Middle Temple. At twenty-five he produced his first tragedy, *The Ambitious Stepmother,* followed in 1702 by *Tamerlane,* in which the distance traversed by English drama since Marlowe can be realised. *Tamerlane* is a magnanimous and very sentimental hero, who is evidently aping the manner and phraseology of the great Elizabethans. His character was drawn with the patriotic intention of representing "the deliverer" William, while Louis XIV. was caricatured as Bajazet. As Johnson said, "our quarrel with Louis has been long over, and it now gratifies neither zeal nor malice to see him painted with aggravated features like a Saracen upon a sign." In 1705 Rowe attempted a comedy, *The Biter,* which caused its inventer intense mirth, but was not appreciated by an audience. He returned to the grand tragic manner, and wrote *Jane Shore* in "imitation of Shakespeare's style." Pope deplored that he should have "professedly imitated the style of a bad age." His last tragedy was *Lady Jane Grey* (1715). In the meantime he had brought out the first octavo edition of Shakespeare's works in 1708 with a few notes and emendations, and a life of the author "such as tradition then almost expiring could supply." Rowe was successful with his own party, the Whigs, from whom he obtained several good sinecures in addition to the post of Poet Laureate (August 1st, 1715). "A gentleman," says Dennis, "who loved to lie in bed all day for his ease and sit up all night for his pleasure," Rowe adorned his leisure by preparing a version of Lucan's *Pharsalia,*

which Johnson (fresh from the congenial task of belabouring *Lycidas*) describes in an ecstasy of exaggeration as "one of the greatest productions of English poetry." Of his plays the same critic observes: "He seldom pierces the breast, but he always delights the ear and often improves the understanding." Rowe died in December, 1718, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, "over against Chaucer." His best known piece, *The Fair Penitent* (1718), reads almost like a travesty of a past Elizabethan drama—all is sentimental and turgid. The blank verse, however, is smooth and literary, and the long speeches are generally rounded off with end-stopped couplets.[1]

[1] Select plays of Dryden and Otway may be studied in the Mermaid Library. Of Dryden's poems there are excellent editions; the Globe (ed. Christie) and the Aldine (ed. Hooper). The *Satires* have also been edited by Prof. Churton Collins; select *Poems* (*Cromwell, Astræ, Annus, Absalom, Religio, Hind and Panther*) by Christie and Firth (Clarendon Press); *The Hind and the Panther* by W. H. Williams, 1900; while of Dryden's prose, the critical Essays* have been finely edited by Prof. Ker (2 vols., 1900). The standard edition since the eighteenth-century work of Malone is that of Sir Walter Scott, as revised by Prof. Saintsbury (author of *Dryden* in "Men of Letters" and in "Chambers"). The racy Lives of Dryden, Otway, and Rowe should be read in Dr. Birkbeck Hill's edition of *Johnson's Lives** (Oxford, 1905). See also Baker's *Biographia Dramatica*, L. N. Chase's *English Heroic Play*, 1903, Beljame and Taine (cited in Book IV. Chap. I.), Lowell's essay on Dryden in *Among my Books*, the Life of Otway in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, and Dr. Garnett's *Age of Dryden.** Matthew Arnold, in his Preface to the *Six Chief Lives* of Johnson, speaks up well for Dryden as a mighty worker for the age of prose. "Let us always bear in mind that the century so well represented by Dryden, Addison, Pope, and Swift, and of which the literary history is so powerfully written by Johnson in his Lives, is a century of prose—a century of which the great work in literature was the formation of English prose. . . . It is the victory of this prose style, 'clear, plain, and short,' over what Burnet calls 'the old style, long and heavy,' which

is the distinguished achievement, in the history of English letters, of the century following the Restoration. From the first it proceeded rapidly and was never checked. Burnet says of the Chancellor Finch, Earl of Nottingham: 'He was long much admired for his eloquence, but it was laboured and affected, and he saw it much despised before he died.' A like revolution of taste brought about a general condemnation of our old prose style, imperfectly disengaged from the style of poetry. By Johnson's time the new style, the style of prose, was altogether paramount in its own proper domain, and in its pride of victorious strength had invaded also the domain of poetry."

CHAPTER III

THE COMIC DRAMATISTS OF THE RESTORATION

"He wrote only a few plays, but they are excellent in their kind. The laws of the drama are strictly observed in them. They abound in characters, all of which are shadowed with the utmost delicacy, and we don't meet with so much as one low or coarse jest. The language is everywhere that of men of fashion, but their actions are those of knaves, a proof that he was perfectly well acquainted with human nature, and frequented what we call polite society."—VOLTAIRE on Congreve.

"I do not know how it is with others, but I feel the better always for the perusal of one of Congreve's—nay, why should I not add even of Wycherley's comedies. I am the gayer at least for it; and I could never connect those sports of a witty fancy in any shape with any result to be drawn from them to imitation in real life."—CHARLES LAMB, *On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century.*

French models—The Restoration stage—Etherege—Wycherley—Sedley—Crowne—Shadwell—Congreve—Farquhar—Vanbrugh—The Collier controversy.

PASSING from the stage of Shakespeare to that of Dryden we appear to have suddenly entered a new world. The representatives of the drama seem instantly transformed by some Circean potion into beings of a lower type. The mere fact that the drama had been proscribed by the Puritans created a furore for plays among the Royalists. No time was lost in dragging old favourites by Jonson and Fletcher out of the seclusion in which they had remained for over twenty years. But these plays were so little adapted to the manners of 1660 that it soon became the fashion to regard them as antediluvian. The two play-

houses, which were all that were licenced in the capital upon the Restoration, depended primarily upon the patronage of the court; and Charles II. was neither indisposed nor wholly unfitted to become an arbiter of dramatic excellence. Inaccessible as he was to the deeper human emotions, and without a grain of poetry in his composition, he was nevertheless a man of exceptional wit and with an exquisite taste and polish. It was not likely that Charles would find Shakespeare and the other dramatists before the flood very much to his taste. His capacity for being bored by the favourite dramatist of his martyred father is, there is little doubt, very accurately illustrated in the pages of *Woodstock*. He and his court had returned from the Continent, where they had become thoroughly imbued with the French taste; and they now looked forward to declamatory tragedy, embodying ideals of supernatural virtue and self-sacrifice, and couched in rhymed couplets approaching as near as possible to the French model. The contemporary taste for extravagant heroic romances such as those of Madame de Scuderi confirmed the capricious taste of a selfish and debauched society for a morbid and impossible virtue. As regards comedy the popular taste took the more simple and intelligible form of a desire for an accurate presentment of contemporary manners, drawing its material from society and not from nature, and consequently depending on wit rather than on humour. The evolution of stage architecture, by means of which plays were now produced no longer upon an exposed stage or platform but rather as a picture in a frame, the introduction of movable scenery, and the substitution of women for boys in female parts [1] which now became common, all this aided by French models, of which

[1] Edward Kynaston, who played Evadne in *The Maid's Tragedy* in 1661, is believed to have been one of the last male actors of women's parts on the English stage. According to

it is true that the English made a very blundering use, led rapidly to a conception of comedy far removed from that of the favourite Fletcher or the still redoubted Ben Jonson. As the taste for spectacle, for music, and for rhyming heroics was inseparable from the new tragedy, so the foppish airs, the filthy language, and the eternal pursuit of women proper to the contemporary gallant, became the regular staple of the Restoration comedy. The scene was invariably laid either in the metropolis or its suburbs.[1]

Of the first generation of this comedy, apart from Dryden, the most typical representatives are Etherege, Wycherley, Sedley, Crowne, and Shadwell. Sir George Etherege was a man of fashion and a courtier, who had been much in Paris, and was familiar with all the devices of the French stage, and his plays are of historical importance

Pepys he was both the prettiest woman and the handsomest man on the boards. Another famous actor in feminine *rôles* was James Nokes, called "Nurse Nokes," from his part in Romeo and Juliet. The ladies soon took their revenge by playing men's parts, to the unconcealed joy of Mr. Pepys.

[1] Just before the Puritan revolution of the Civil War closed down the theatres, the stage in England seems to have been in a prosperous condition. There were at least five companies playing pretty regularly: the King's Servants at the Globe (Blackfriars in winter); the Queen's Servants at the Cockpit, Drury Lane; the Prince's Servants in Salisbury Court; two inferior companies at the Fortune and the Red Bull. When the Civil War broke out, the actors, as might have been expected, ranged themselves on the side of the King. Many of them went into the royal army: John Lowin, a famous Falstaff, took an inn called the Three Pigeons, at Brentford, and died very old and very poor. Wild Robinson was assassinated by the enthusiast Harrison (vide *Woodstock*), who shot him through the head, after he had laid down his arms, exclaiming, "Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently." In 1647 all public stages were pulled down, and by an Act of February 11th, 1648, all actors convicted of acting were to be

as prototypes of the comedies of manners so brilliantly developed in the next generation by Congreve. His first comedy, *The Comical Revenge, or Love in a Tub,* appeared as early as 1664; but his best play, *The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter,* was only given to the world twelve years later, in 1676. The personification of the fashionable coxcomb in the title-rôle is said to have been the image of the author, while the heartless rake Dorimant is believed to have been a study from Rochester. But Sir Fopling is more interesting as the ancestor of Vanbrugh's Lord Foppington; as for Dorimant he is perfectly anticipatory of the foreheads of bronze, hearts like the nether millstone, and tongues set on fire of hell, which the comic dramatists of the Restoration took such a peculiar pleasure in depicting. Both as a mirror of the time and as a piece of stage construction, Etherege's comedy marks an advance upon its predecessors. His plays suffer from a deficiency of plot,

publicly whipped, and all spectators for each offence fined 5*s*. Many actors must have nearly starved, though Cromwell seems to have connived at a certain amount of furtive activity on the part of the old players. In March, 1660, during the dictatorship of General Monk, a bookseller, John Rhodes, obtained a licence and opened a small theatre, the Cockpit, in Drury Lane, where Betterton and Kynaston appeared. Rival houses were soon set up at the Red Bull and at Salisbury Court. All these performed under the authority of the Master of the Revels; but in August, 1660, the monopoly was shattered by the issue of a grant empowering Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant to erect two companies of players for the representation of plays in convenient places. After a complicated triangular duel between the Master of the Revels, Davenant, and Killigrew, by December, 1660, all the chief available actors were grouped upder two flags: Betterton and the majority of Rhodes's troupe under Davenant at Salisbury Court; while Kynaston joined Mohun, Hart, Clun, and the old actors, as they were called (several of them had been trained at Blackfriars), who took service under Killigrew in Vere Street, Clare Market. Davenant soon removed to a house in Lincoln's Inn

a deficiency of wit, and a superfluity of naughtiness; beastliness drops from them like honey from the comb; yet they cannot be denied to possess a light airy grace, and to have imbibed something of the manner though little of the humour of Molière.

But the first real master of this earthy, sensual, and devilish comedy, as Macaulay calls it, was William Wycherley, the son of a Shropshire squire, who has achieved the reputation of being the coarsest writer that ever polluted the English stage—unless, indeed, an even lower deep was sounded by the fair Aphra Behn—peace be with her ashes! Being sent to France during the Revolution, he became a Catholic; but recanted finally, if Pope may be believed, to recant again. He had learnt of M. de Montausier the art of wearing gloves and a peruke, which sufficed in those days to make a gentleman. This merit and the success of a filthy piece, *Love in a Wood,* first produced

Fields, while Killigrew established himself in the New Theatre, or Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in April, 1663. The internal arrangements of the theatre changed rather rapidly between 1660 and 1700. At the former date the playhouses had many points of contact with the private, or candle-light, houses under Queen Elizabeth. By 1700 it approximated much more nearly to the theatre of the present day. When Charles II. was chief stage patron, and Mr. Pepys an assiduous playgoer, the pieces were still advertised on the street-posts; the posts which Dr. Johnson used to touch with his stick as he walked along. During the three last decades of the seventeenth century the time of performance changed rather rapidly from three or half-past to six in the afternoon. The doors were thrown open at noon, and the leisurely playgoers of that time frequently wasted half a day sitting in their places. A little later, between 1670 and 1680, rich people would send lackeys to keep a place for them to witness a new play. After the epilogue, the actors announced the details of their next performance. The author generally took his benefit on the third performance of his piece. All authors were free of the theatre in those days, and deadheads of other kinds seem to have been only too numerous.

in the spring of 1671, but possibly written earlier, drew upon him the attentions of the Duchess of Cleveland, and the maîtresse procured the indulgence of the King. Lely's portrait testifies to Wycherley's good looks and the absurd fables which he circulated about his early work are sufficient evidence of his vanity; but the French polish to which he set up a claim is not very highly estimated by the best judges. He may be likened, indeed, to the donkey in the fable imitating the gambols of the lap-dog. His *Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1671-2), which borrows the leading idea from Chalderon, has not unjustly been styled by Hazlitt a long and foolish farce. Poor though it was, it was decidedly superior to *Love in a Wood.*

That Wycherley had benefited by his experience is shown in his next and most brilliant comedy, *The Country Wife.* In this he shows a strong stage sense. The two chief parts of Pinchwife and Horner are striking creations. The

The floor of the house was devoted to the half-crown pit; slightly raised above this was a tier of four-shilling boxes, above this the eighteen-penny or middle gallery—notorious as the haunt of vizard masks ("Some there are," says Dryden, "who take their degrees of lewdness in our middle galleries"). Above were "the gods" of the shilling gallery, to which footmen were admitted gratis at the end of the fourth act—later, by 1700, to witness the whole play. The wits and beaux congregated chiefly in the pit, a separate corner of which was consecrated to the fops, who often made such a noise that the players could hardly make themselves heard. But ladies often penetrated to the pit, and shared the manners of the place. "Sitting behind in the pit, in a dark place," says Mr. Pepys, "a lady spit backward upon me by a mistake, not seeing me; but, after seeing her to be a very pretty lady, I was not troubled at it at all." The stage still extended, but to a decreasing extent, like a flattened U into the auditorium, and one of the players' entrances at least on each side was in front of the curtain, which was drawn sideways from the centre. Owing to the experience gained from the court masques arranged by Inigo Jones, the scenic arrangements had been greatly de-

preliminary dialogue of Act I. is brilliant in itself, and admirably adapted to the atmosphere of the play. The gallants are most skilfully grouped, and the coxcomb Sparkish is a really humorous conception. Charged with malicious intention and with *esprit du diable,* the piece abounds in opportunities for a competent troupe of actors. Its one drawback is that its loathsome character, topic, and treatment alike render it absolutely unactable.

A viler parody of characters and situations suggested by dramatic genius of the highest order can hardly be found anywhere than in Wycherley's last comedy, *The Plain Dealer,* acted in 1674 and printed three years later. Ideas in this are deliberately taken from *Twelfth Night* and from Racine's *Plaideurs.* The groundwork is based upon Molière's *Misanthrope,* while the criticism and defence of the coarseness of *The Country Wife* is evidently suggested by Molière's brilliant comedy, *Le Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes.* "Quantum mutatus ab illo!" As an acting play, this queer medley is far inferior to *The Country Wife.* Many of the scenes are dull, brutal, and

veloped since the days of Ben Jonson. The stage was lighted from above by branches or hoops of candles suspended from the ceiling. The day had passed when the gallants mounted upon the stage, and aired their finery or drank their tobacco under the gaze of the audience. The "Fop Alley" to which Davenant alludes appears to have been the passage between the orchestra and the front row of the pit, from which between the acts the fine gentlemen ogled the boxes. The make-up of the actors was, as regards effect, probably much the same as at present. A huge periwig crowned the head of each actor, and uncomplimentary wits were taunted with being less able to judge a play than a peruke. As regards costume, no pretension was made to historical accuracy, and Henry V. wore the cast-off clothes of Charles II. Little advance, in fact, was made in this respect until long after the time of Garrick, who, as we know, played Macbeth in a scarlet military uniform (for an excellent summary, see *Thomas Betterton** by R. W. Lowe).

heavy; but there are some good indications of character, especially in the Widow and Jerry Blackacre, in whom hints have been found for Tony Lumpkin and his mamma. The moral obtuseness of Wycherley is finely illustrated by Macaulay when he compare's Wycherley's hero Manly with Molière's Alceste.[1] "Wycherley borrowed Alceste, and turned him into a ferocious sensualist, who believed himself as great a rascal as he thought everybody else. So depraved was his moral taste that, while he firmly believed that he was producing a picture of virtue too exalted for the commerce of this world, he was really delineating the greatest rascal that is to be found even in his own writings."

Of the remaining comedy contemporary with that of Wycherley it is necessary to do little more than mention *The Mulberry Garden,* a slender comedy by the witty talker Sir Charles Sedley (1639—1701). *The Mulberry Garden,* which owed something to Molière's *Ecole des Maris,* was given in 1668, and, in spite of its gross impropriety, could elicit even from Mr. Pepys no more praise than "here and there a good thing." More urbane is a stage-play which marks the close of the first period of Restoration comedy, the *Sir Courtly Nice* of Crowne—"little starch Johnnie Crowne," as Rochester called him. Charles II. gave the author a plot derived from a Spanish comedy by Moreto (1661). Charles I., it will be remembered,

[1] The end of the plain dealer himself—of "manly Wycherley," as his contemporaries called him—was not unfitting such an egregious champion of misanthropy, obscenity, and libertinage. He incurred the King's disfavour by a marriage above his rank, was imprisoned for debt upon the lady's death, turned Papist, and lost the art of flattery. His last act, ten days before his death at the age of seventy-five, was to marry a girl of sixteen in order to cut his nephew out of the succession. He died in December, 1715, and was buried near Samuel Butler in the vault of St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

rendered the same service to Shirley. But old Rowley died on the eve of its production, and so gave Crowne an excuse for bitterly complaining of the non-fulfilment of a promise ("to see about getting him a place") by one who was perhaps the most faithless not only of men, but even of kings.

Between these two comedies of 1668 and 1685 we must leave a short space in our chronology for the humorsome comedies of Thomas Shadwell, an inedited dramatist who is now remembered less as having inherited the mantle of Ben Jonson than as having succeeded to the drugget of Flecknoe. Three imitations from the French—*The Sullen Lovers* (1668), *The Miser,* and *The Libertine*—based in the main upon Molière—were followed by some original and, upon the whole, more vigorous plays such as *Epsom Wells* (1676), *The Lancashire Witches, Bury Fair,* and *The Squire of Alsatia* (1689), this last play dealing with the evil fame of the sanctuary of Whitefriars, and supplying many hints to *The Fortunes of Nigel.* The worthy "Og" was a capital talker, but his wit deserted him when he tried to write. He excels, however, in Smollettian sketches of the coarser humour of Restoration London. He prided himself on introducing not less than four new humours into each comedy. *The Squire of Alsatia* needs a glossary of cant words to make it intelligible to the reader. *The Scowrers* is loaded with Gargantuan descriptions of the delicacies of the various seasons. *The Lancashire Witches* is full of folk-lore and dialect, in order to explain which, when the play was printed, the author provided a series of erudite notes. As a collector of strange expressions and forms of life Shadwell indeed showed himself no unworthy imitator of Ben Jonson, Dekker, or the omnidicent author of *Lenten Stuff,* the puzzling Tom Nash.

The interval which separates *Peregrine Pickle* from

Tristram Shandy is hardly more marked than that which separates a play such as Wycherley's *Plain Dealer* (1674) from the first comedy, *The Old Bachelor* (1693), of William Congreve. The depravity of the Revolution drama is perhaps more dangerous than the obscenity and ferocious coarseness of the Restoration drama properly so-called; so much more attractive and insidious is the innuendo of Congreve than the outspoken grossness and satirical savagery of Wycherley. The substitution of wit for satire, of *double-entendre* for verbal brutality, is thoroughly indicative of the polishing process which had been going on since 1660. On leaving Shadwell and Wycherley and coming to Congreve, we feel, at any rate, as Macaulay says, that the worst is over; that we are one remove farther from the Restoration; that we have passed the nadir of national taste and morality.

William Congreve was born at Bardsey, near Leeds, in February, 1670. His father, a cadet of an old Staffordshire family, had distinguished himself among the cavaliers in the Civil War, was set down after the Restoration for the order of the Royal Oak, and subsequently settled in Ireland under the patronage of the Earl of Burlington. "Harmonious Congreve" passed his childhood at Youghal, went to school at Kilkenny (the school of Swift and Berkeley), and completed an excellent education at Trinity College, Dublin, and the Middle Temple. Congreve troubled himself little about pleading, however, and gave himself up to literature and society, in which his wit, looks, and cool egotism admirably fitted him to shine. His ambition was to double the part of exquisite and man of letters. The history of his life is the history of a conflict between these two impulses. He inclined as he grew older to give a strong preference to the fine gentleman—a coxcombry which elicited the excellent reproof of Voltaire:

"If you had been a mere private gentleman, I should not have come to see you."

Congreve's success as a dramatist was almost as rapid and as undisputed as that of Sheridan. The ease with which he professed his work to be done is probably just about as delusive.[1] It was in the autumn of 1692 that Congreve submitted his first play, *The Old Batchelor,* to Dryden. Dryden, whose generosity as a critic is notorious, said that he had never read such a first play, and lent his services to shape it for production at Drury Lane in January, 1693. It was a great success, and was worth a place to Congreve from Charles Montague, then a Lord of the Treasury, to whom Congreve dedicated his second play, *The Double Dealer,* a much more considerable effort. *Love for Love,* his most vivacious stage comedy, was given at Betterton's new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1695. His sole tragedy, *The Mourning Bride,* appeared in 1697, and his last piece, *The Way of the World,* in 1700. After this he left "the ungrateful stage" partly owing to the annoyance of his awkward controversy with Jeremy Collier. Lost to the stage at thirty, Congreve became the Beau Nash of the literary world. "Regarded as an extinct volcano, he gave umbrage to no rivals; his urbane and undemonstrative temper kept him out of literary feuds; all agreed to adore so benign and inoffensive a deity, and the general respect of the lettered world culminated in Pope's dedication of his *Homer* to him—the most splendid literary tribute the age could bestow. Sinecure Government places made his

1 "There is a strange affectation in authors of appearing to have done everything by chance. *The Old Batchelor* was written for amusement in the languor of convalescence." Yet it is composed, says Johnson, with great elaboration of dialogue and "incessant ambition of wit."

circumstances more than easy; but he suffered continually from gout, the effect of free living, and he became blind, or nearly so, in his latter years." Of the liaisons formed by Congreve with the actresses of the period, the most notable was that between him and the fascinating Mrs. Bracegirdle, for whom he created such parts as Araminta, Angelica, Cynthia, and Millamant. But in his premature old age he deserted her for a haughtier beauty, Henrietta, the sole daughter of the Great Duke of Marlborough, to whom he left the bulk of his fortune of £10,000. He died at his house in London on January 19th, 1730, and the Duchess spent his legacy on a diamond necklace, an ivory image of the poet, and a gorgeous funeral and monument in Westminster Abbey; while poor Bracegirdle went shabby, and the Congreve family are said to have been left in a most poetical distress.

Sir Fopling Flutter, Dorimant, Sparkish, and Sir Courtly Nice—it was among such parts as these, and not among the ruder satire of *The Plain Dealer* or *Epsom Wells,* that Congreve sought for the development of his comedy.[1] The critics are usually so pre-occupied with the wit and repartee of Congreve's comedy that they have perhaps been in some danger of ignoring the humour which is seldom absent amidst all the superficial glitter. As a matter of fact, the two qualities are so compounded in Congreve as to form the best possible amalgam for purposes of the comic stage. It has been said of Mr. Meredith that he cannot refrain from making the most unlikely of his characters witty, but makes them all alike utter epi-

[1] He was, of course, thoroughly conversant with the Latin and the French comic drama, and he was able to reproduce, not only the form of the latter as when he adopted the plan of changing the scene upon the entrance and exit of each character, but also to a considerable extent its external polish and verbal refinement.

grams culled from *The Pilgrim's Scrip.* The same thing applies to Congreve, who makes of Jeremy, a servant in *Love for Love,* one of the wittiest figures in the whole realm of English drama. This seems a rather too literal adaptation of the Molièresque valet, yet the whole of this play is sparkling with wit and gaiety from beginning to end. The plot is so incoherent as to raise the piece little, if at all, above the level of a farce—a plot was indeed an afterthought with Congreve; but the dialogue is so sparkling, and each one of the characters so entertaining, that *Love for Love* is probably on the whole the brightest and most playable of Congreve's plays (it made a record run of thirteen consecutive nights), though it yields in intellectuality, and in the gossamer wit of the dialogue, to Congreve's last comedy, *The Way of the World.* For a stage scene it is almost impossible to beat that in which Mrs. Foresight and Mrs. Frail arrive at mutual understanding, or that in which Tattle illustrates to Scandal the importance of delicacy in treating a lady's reputation. But the relations between Mirabel and Mrs. Millamant in *The Way of the World* have a more subtle interest for the understanding. The intricacy of the plot, and the distilled irony in much of the dialogue, exact an amount of attention which seems at times hardly consistent with the traffic of the stage; yet, taken as a whole, *The Way of the World* attains to the high-water mark of English comedy, or, as Mr. Swinburne calls it, "final and flawless comedy." It might be called the conquest of a town coquette, and Millamant is perfect coquette. It is a piece of genius in a writer to make a woman's manner of speech betray her. Yet you feel sensible of Millamant's mutinous presence, haughty mouth, bewitching lips, from the moment when she comes on "full-sail with her fan spread and her streamers out and a shoal of fools for tenders, until she finally consents to dwindle into a

wife." She has all the charm that springs from the frivolity without the fragility or the febrility of "Frou-Frou." Crispness of style is perfected in Congreve. He is at once precise and voluble—exquisite combination, so rare in English. Sheridan imitates him, but as a limb of Molière would (*teste* Swinburne) have sufficed to make a Congreve, so a limb of Congreve, or of Vanbrugh either for that matter, would have sufficed to make a Sheridan.

George Farquhar, 1678—1707, whose work extends into the early years of Queen Anne's reign, was the son of a parson, and was born at Londonderry in 1678. He forsook Trinity College, Dublin, for the stage; but he gave up acting owing to an accident with a sword, which had nearly proved fatal to a brother actor in the course of a stage duel. He obtained a commission as captain in Lord Orrery's regiment; but left the army in order to marry a girl who fell in love with his appearance, and to obtain her end falsely gave herself out to be an heiress. Another disappointment came to him through the non-fulfilment of the promise by Ormonde to get him another regiment. Farquhar came to London in 1699 with a few guineas in his pocket, and found it necessary to write for his living. His plays consequently came out in rapid succession, and, in spite of the ill-luck of their author (who also acted some of their leading *rôles*), they have much more good humour in them than those of Wycherley or Congreve. *Love in a Bottle,* his first play, given in 1699, has not much to recommend it save its gaiety and rattle. *The Constant Couple* (1700) and *Sir Harry Wildair* have more character about them.

Farquhar improved upon all his previous work in *The Recruiting Officer* of 1706; but his best play, by common consent, is the last, *The Beaux' Stratagem,* written shortly before his death. The scene in *The Recruiting Officer,* in which Sergeant Kite cajoles two honest fellows into the

belief that they are willing to serve their Queen, is typical of Farquhar's breezy style. But *The Beaux' Stratagem* is livelier still in the variety of its incidents and characters. The rascally landlord Boniface, Squire Sullen, and the inimitable servant Scrub; Gibbet the highwayman, the impudent Archer, and the Irish-French Jesuit, Father Foigard—all these supply parts which were keenly appreciated both by actors and audiences throughout the eighteenth century. The scene is laid at Lichfield, and the room in the George Inn, in which Boniface entertained Aimwell, and where Farquhar is believed to have stayed, is still pointed out.

Sir John Vanbrugh, playwright and architect, born in the parish of St. Nicholas Acons, London, in January, 1664, was the son of Giles Vanbrugh, who married in 1660 the youngest daughter of Sir Dudley Carleton. The production of Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* at the Theatre Royal in January, 1696, supplied a play to Vanbrugh on which to hang his first acted comedy. He thought that it would be interesting to develop the situation upon which Cibber had rung down the curtain, and the result was *The Relapse, or Virtue in Danger,* given at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, on Boxing Day, 1696. The leading *rôles* in *The Relapse*—Lord Foppington, Sir Tunbelly Clumsey, his daughter Miss Hoyden, and the maid Abigail—at once established themselves in popular favour, and the piece remained a prime favourite throughout the eighteenth century. Sheridan's *A Trip to Scarborough* is one of the numerous transformations through which it has passed. Lord Foppington was splendidly played by Cibber; and as a typical fop, he is perhaps the best of the line commenced by Etherege's Sir Fopling Flutter, Crowne's Sir Courtly Nice, and Cibber's own Sir Novelty Fashion, and continued in such parts as Ogleby, Dundreary, and Beau Austin. The vivacity of *The Relapse,* which springs

from Vanbrugh's happy knack of improvising upon a situation, is maintained in the stronger and more original play, *The Provoked Wife,* famous for the parts of Sir John Brute and Lady Brute. Sir John, a bully and a wife-beater, a peevish sot, a quarrelsome and rake-helly coward, is undoubtedly one of the most repulsive figures ever seen on any stage, yet the part seems to have been grandly played by Betterton, and created a great impression. It was long afterwards the favourite part of Garrick, who was in the drunken scene, says Hazlitt, inimitable. Even more effective and exhilarating to the modern reader are the scenes between the affected Lady Fanciful and her sycophantic French maid. There is a spontaneous gaiety and ease about these scenes which was new to the English stage. Vanbrugh is indeed one of the few men who has known how to transplant the very delicate and delightful stage prattle of France across the channel.

Vanbrugh's *un*moral levity reaches its climax in *The Confederacy,* a comedy combining an infinite contrivance and intrigue with a matchless spirit of impudence. Corinna, the heroine, was by her own admission "a devilish girl at bottom." As for the hero, Dick Amlet, an incipient Barry Lyndon, he is surely one of the drollest, most adroit, and most brazen knaves that ever strutted on the boards. Vanbrugh's remaining comedies—*Æsop, The False Friend, The Mistake, The Country House,* and *A Journey to London*—are comparatively little read and unimportant. *Æsop,* in two parts, a successful adaptation from M. Boursault, was given at Drury Lane in 1697; *The False Friend* (1702) was derived from the Spanish through Le Sage; *The Mistake* (1705) was a rapid adaptation from Molière's *Dépit Amoureux; The Country House* (1705), like *The Confederacy,* was based upon a comedy by the popular French playwright Dancourt. *The Journey to London,* a light comedy which promised well, was left at his death

in a fragmentary condition; but was finished by Colley Cibber as *The Provoked Husband,* and given with great success at the Lane on January 10th, 1728, running twenty-eight nights! Both this play and *The Provoked Wife* were accorded the honours of a French version.[1]

"The broad and robust humour of Vanbrugh's comedies," says Mr. Swinburne, "gives him a place at the master's (Congreve's) right hand; on the left stands Farquhar, whose bright light genius is to Congreve's as female is to male, as moonlight unto sunlight." These three comic dramatists (with Wycherley) form by themselves a distinct facet of English literature, and not one of the least brilliant. There is a snap about them and a levity, an artistic detachment and consequent technique which we shall hardly find elsewhere. Through such plays as *Much*

[1] From 1701, when he commenced building Castle Howard for Lord Carlisle, "Van" was seriously distracted from the stage by his grandiose work as an architect. In 1703 he designed and built a theatre for himself at the lower end of the Haymarket. This was specially constructed for opera (the Italian development of masque), of which he was one of the earliest patrons in this country; but the theatre showed grave acoustic defects, and Vanbrugh was very glad to transfer his interest in the concern to another party; this was in 1708, three years after the Haymarket Opera House was opened. In the meantime, he had commenced work upon the vast palace which it was proposed to erect for Marlborough at Woodstock in commemoration of the victory of Blenheim. Vanbrugh, whose ideas had received an ineffaceable impress from the façade of Versailles and from the French fortresses in which he had sojourned, had a passion for producing a stupendous effect by means of size and solidity which amounted almost to megalomania. At Blenheim he had a grand scope, hampered though he was by the hostility of the Duchess of Marlborough; but it can hardly be said that he rose fully to his opportunities, though there is undoubtedly a certain scenic splendour about the general conception. Voltaire remarked upon Blenheim that if the rooms were as wide as the walls were thick, the château would be con-

Ado, The Merry Wives, Monsieur Thomas, The Little French Lawyer, we might have arrived by a purely native process at some such development; but as a matter of fact, the Puritan closure intervened in 1642, and the product came to us predominantly through French and more remotely Spanish influence.

We must not judge these comedies of a corrupt court (Dryden attributed the main fault to the courtiers of Charles II.) too harshly, remembering that when they lost the stage, unlike the Elizabethan drama, they lost all. The town comedies of Shadwell and Wycherly are annihilated utterly, and all that remains is a pillar of salt.[1]

venient enough. But the last thing that Vanbrugh thought of was the personal comfort of his clients; provided he made his effect he was satisfied. His other works included Vanbrugh Castle (quite recently demolished) at Blackheath, the "Goose Pie" (so mercilessly mocked at by Swift) in Whitehall, and Grimthorpe in Lincolnshire, containing "the biggest entrance-hall" in the kingdom. Of all these it might be said, as the Earl of Peterborough remarked of the strange temples and mausolea which the architect designed for the famous gardens at Stowe, "immensity and Vanbrugh appear in the whole and in every part." His Brobdingnagian style in architecture elicited from Abel Evans the well-known epitaph—

"Lie heavy on him, earth, for he
Laid many a heavy load on thee."

Vanbrugh died at his house at Whitehall on March 26th, 1726. He seemed to have been much beloved in his family circle, and was very popular in society and among the Kit-Kats (of the Whig club so named) as a man of wit and honour. Walpole somewhat inconclusively attributes his ease in writing to the fact that he lived in the best society, and wrote as they talked.

[1] For the history of the Restoration drama see Ward, Beljame, and John Genest's *Some Account of the English Stage* (10 vols., 1832). Wycherley, Congreve, Shadwell, Farquhar, and Vanbrugh are included in the useful Mermaid Series *: the best plays of each author being selected and printed without alteration and without comment, save in the respective intro-

ductions. The four chief comic dramatists were edited by Leigh Hunt, and his edition in 1840 provoked Macaulay's famous *Essay* in *The Edinburgh Review*. Compare with this the essays by Lamb, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, and Mr. William Archer in his introduction to Farquhar. There are good sketches of Congreve by Edmund Gosse, Dr. Schmid (1897), A. Bennewitz (*Congreve und Molière*), G. S. Street, and A. C. Ewald. Of Vanbrugh there is an excellent edition * by W. C. Ward (2 vols., 1893). See also the article by Thomas Seccombe in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (lviii. 86-94). For our knowledge of the stage before Colley Cibber we are largely indebted to Mr. Pepys, and to the brief Historical Review of the Stage entitled *Roscius Anglicanus* (1708), by John Downes, book-keeper and prompter to the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The best part of what can thus be painfully gleaned is well summarised in R. W. Lowe's *Thomas Betterton* * (1901).

A thunderbolt descended from a clear sky upon the corrupt stage of Wycherley, Congreve, and Vanbrugh when in March, 1698, Jeremy Collier hastily put together and brought out in an octavo of some 300 pages his famous *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage.* Born in 1650, Collier was educated at Cambridge (Caius), became Lecturer at Gray's Inn, but three years later refused to take the oaths to William, and joined the ranks of the nonjurors. A born controversialist, after dealing in a spirit of comparative moderation with the points indicated by his title, Collier warmed considerably to the work. He denounced the disrespect shown by the stage to sacred things and sacred persons (to wit, the clergy); he fulminated against the immorality of plays in which the purblind Fondlewife is always triumphantly fooled by some "gay Lothario" or other; and finally he reverts with tedious erudition to the old argument of authority. His pamphlet thus stands half-way between the *Histrio-Mastix* of William Prynne and the *Absolute Unlawfulness* invoked by William Law. The book sold like wildfire, and elicited, of course, a whole troupe of replies by actors and authors, by, among others, Gildon, Wycherley, Filmer, John Dennis, Tom Durfey, Tom Brown, Motteux, Vanbrugh and Congreve. Dryden seemed to admit a certain amount of provocation while lamenting the vehemence of the onslaught. "Perhaps the parson stretch'd a point too far," he complains in the Epilogue to

The Pilgrim. The consequence was that societies to curb the licence of the stage sprang up in all quarters; the stage was terrorised by informers on the watch for blasphemous expressions; with the result that the stage, among a fluctuating but far from negligible section of Englishmen, obtained a sulphurous reputation for licence and wickedness, a reputation almost peculiar to our country, and one from which it has never, perhaps, quite completely recovered.

CHAPTER IV

ESSAYS, LETTERS, AND MEMOIRS: CONTROVERSIAL AND MINOR PROSE

"Such is the romance of authorship, that what was intended to be the most private of documents has become one of the great books. . . . Great as is the fascination of this most personal document as a problem in literary psychology, not less great is its interest to us as an interpreter of an age which we people with lewd Rochesters or mere Vicars of Bray. In it we get the accent and flush of these strange days."—*Introduction to the "Globe Pepys"* (ed. G. Gregory Smith).

Mr. Pepys and his Diary—John Evelyn—Bishop Burnet—The *Lives* of the Norths—Lucy Hutchinson—George Savile, Marquis of Halifax—Sir William Temple—*The Battle of the Books*—Whitlocke, Luttrell, Ludlow, and Lilly—Three great antiquaries: Dugdale, Wood, and Aubrey.

Samuel Pepys, of an old family of Cottenham, Cambridgeshire, was the son of John Pepys,[1] a not too prosperous tailor in London, and was born probably at Brampton, Hunts, whither his father afterwards retired to a small estate, on February 23rd, 1633. He left St. Paul's School in 1650 (he was then "a great Roundhead"), and settled at Magdalene College, Cambridge, to which foundation upon his death he bequeathed his valuable library.[2] We know little of his college career, save for the fact that he was once admonished for being scandalously overserved with liquor. On December 1st, 1655, when he was still without settled means of support, he married Elizabeth

[1] The pronunciation of the surname has been much in dispute; but the evidence is in favour of *peeps*, rather than *peps*, *pep-pis*, *papes*, *pips*, or other euphonic fancies.

[2] See *Gentleman's Magazine*, February and March, 1906.

St. Michel, a beautiful and portionless girl of fifteen, daughter of Alexandre St. Michel, a scatter-brained Huguenot who came to England in the retinue of Henrietta Maria, and was dismissed by that Queen for striking a friar. In 1656 Pepys entered the family, and became factotum, of his second cousin, Sir Edward Montagu, afterwards Earl of Sandwich. This led to a secretaryship and a place at the Navy Board. He studied the multiplication table, mastered not only accounts, but all the details of the navy, and soon became the "life of the office." In January, 1660, he commenced his famous *Diary,* which reveals him to us as gradually increasing in prosperity. In March, 1668, he made a great speech before the House of Commons in defence of the naval administration, and soon after this became the most important of the naval officials. In 1668 he set up his coach. In May, 1669, he had to give up his diary, as he found the writing so harmful to his eyesight. Mrs. Pepys died a few months later. Subsequently he became secretary to the Admiralty, and obtained a seat in Parliament. During the Jesuit scare of 1679 he was accused of complicity in the "Popish Plot," but was able, though not without great expense, to clear himself satisfactorily. In 1683 he accompanied Lord Dartmouth to Tangier, and wrote a *Journal* of the proceedings. Next year he was chosen President of the Royal Society, and frequently entertained that body at his house in York Buildings. Upon the Revolution he was cashiered, and then after a short detention withdrew to a dignified and learned retirement at Clapham. He lived on until Anne's reign, and died at Clapham in the odour of sanctity, having received the sacraments from the nonjuror, George Hickes, on May 26th, 1703. His contemporary, John Evelyn, speaks in the highest terms of his industry, knowledge of the navy, generosity, and learning. He was buried on June 5th in a vault in St. Olave's, Hart Street. His neatly

written manuscript *Diary* was deposited with his other books, in six bound volumes, at Magdalene College, Cambridge. It was written in Shelton's system of tachygraphy or shorthand, which Pepys probably learned as a boy at college. It was first deciphered between 1819 and 1822 by John Smith, afterwards rector of Baldock, then an undergraduate of St. John's. In 1825 about half the whole of the transcript was edited by Lord Braybrooke. It was transcribed again by Mynors Bright, 1875-9, when four-fifths of the whole was published. The whole, save for a few flagrant indecencies, has been edited by Mr. H. B. Wheatley, 1893-9.

It is a curious fact that within a few years of the Restoration so many books that can only be described as quite unique in character, such as *Hudibras, Pilgrim's Progress, Paradise Lost, Samson Agonistes,* and *Pepys, His Diary,* should have been produced. Not any of them perhaps are now very much read; we are strongly disposed to take them upon trust. There are strong elements of tediousness in nearly all of them, yet all of them have become absolutely part of our literary consciousness.

Pepys is really as unique at St. Simon in his own way, a more human and more primitive way; and he is almost, if not quite, as valuable to the historian, to the naval and theatrical historian especially, and also as affording an unrivalled social picture of his times. Still more unique is the *Diary* as revealing the *whole area* of a temperament not in itself, we imagine, by any means exceptional, always acquiring, always busy, always curious, always amused, always making the best of himself, and parading himself and his good repute as it were in a fine new coat. His cheerfulness and interest in life were so animated, his vitality is so great, that "to read Mr. Pepys is to enjoy our own brief innings better." But we marvel especially when we recognise that we owe a picture as detailed and as

unembarrassed as Boswell's picture of Johnson to no other man than to Mr. Pepys himself. He was his own Boswell, and when we reflect on this we may well come to regard Mr. Pepys as a kind of man monster, for no man has done the like before or since. St. Augustine, it is true, attempted something of the kind, but his confessions are sadly handicapped by his saintship, as are Rousseau's by his distorting theories and by the psychological pose he finds it requisite to assume. But Pepys tells us everything quite cheerfully and simply, without the gloss either of poetry, romance, or philosophy. He tells us all his little meannesses and brutalities quite frankly. He tells us, for instance, how he kicked his cook-maid, and how he was annoyed, not with himself, but with a nobleman's footboy, who was an unobserved spectator of the incident. He had a pretty wife at home, poor wretch! yet nothing would content him but to roam abroad and flit inconstantly from flower to flower. He was vain, greedy, wanton, pious, repentant, profligate, all on paper. He lived in an age when old Rowley led the revels, and he humbly followed in his wake, and although his *Diary* has its tedious spaces, it is in the end mighty good sport indeed.

Had Pepys any idea at the back of his mind that he was addressing a vast audience in the remote future—that his unique confidences to himself would be unravelled some day, and that the very Pepys would stand revealed to the world as no other man before or since? This is a question which every reader of Pepys will put to himself, and it is one which we have reflected upon not seldom. The best answer that we have been able to find to it hitherto is a passage by R. L. Stevenson in his volume on *Men and Books*. "Pepys was not such an ass," says Stevenson "but that he must have perceived as he proceeded with his *Diary* that his book was not like other books. He was a great reader, and he knew what other books were like. It

must at least have crossed his mind that some one might ultimately decipher the manuscript, and he himself, with all his pains and pleasures, be resuscitated in some later day, and the thought, although discouraged, must have warmed his heart. He was not such an ass besides but he must have been conscious of the deadly explosives, the gun-cotton and the giant-powder, he was hoarding in his drawer. Let some contemporary light upon the journal, and Pepys was plunged for ever in social and political disgrace. We can trace the growth of his terrors by two facts. In 1660, while the *Diary* was still in its youth, he tells about it, as a matter of course, to a lieutenant in the navy; but in 1669, when it was already near an end, he could have bitten his tongue out, as the saying is, because he had let slip his secret to one so grave and friendly as Sir William Coventry. And from two other facts I think we may infer that he had entertained, even if he had not acquiesced in, the thought of a far distant publicity. The first is of capital importance—the *Diary* was not destroyed. The second—that he took unusual precautions to confound the cipher in roguish passages—proves beyond question that he was thinking of some other reader besides himself. Perhaps while his friends were admiring the greatness of his behaviour at the approach of death he may have had a twinkling hope of immortality."

A very different estimate of the probabilities of the case is upheld by a less impressionistic critic, Sir Leslie Stephen: "The piquancy of the *Diary*," he says, "is not due to its expression of uncommon emotions, but precisely to the frankness which reveals emotions, all but universal, which most people conceal from themselves, and nearly all men from others. Boswell not only felt, but avowed similar weaknesses. Pepys avowed them, though only to himself. He was not a hypocrite in cipher, though no doubt as reserved as his neighbours in longhand. The 'unconscious

humour' which Lowell attributes to him lies in the coolness of his confession, with which his readers sympathise, though they would not make similar confessions themselves. It seems to be highly improbable that he ever thought of publicity for his diaries, though he may have kept them as materials for an autobiography which was never published."

What is perfectly clear is that Pepys is no longer what the formal age imagined him to be, a garrulous braggart who amused after ages by accident. His ferocious enjoyment of life and his absorbing greed of sensation were linked not only with an amazing *savoir vivre,* but also with a peculiar gift of frank and forthright utterance on paper.

A singular contrast to the naughtiness of this world-famous *étude intime* is supplied by the studious and respectable *Diary* (first published 1818) of John Evelyn, the loyalist virtuoso and country gentleman whose long life from 1620 to 1706 is almost synchronous with that of his worthy friend and fellow-diarist. For the two were great friends, though Pepys cherished an inward laugh at Evelyn's vanity, and Evelyn was sandblind as regards the real and inner Pepys.

Evelyn, as has been justly said, never drops the somewhat artificial manner of the cultivated, dignified gentleman with a mind open to appreciate all the best which his age had to give him on the side of science, miscellaneous information, artistic taste, but never harassing his reader with any imaginative or speculative effort of his own. He represents the last word of a scholarly but somewhat frigid self-culture. He was essentially a student who assimilates with no little versatility the many-sided culture which foreign travel and a gradual absorption of Renaissance ideas had rendered possible in England. He has, too, much of the curiosity which is so conspicuous in Pepys, but without Pepys's absorbing zest in the life that he saw about him. As an elegant virtuoso he is almost the equal of Horace

Walpole in a later age, but without the propensity to witty and malicious gossip which renders Horry Walpole so inimitable a chronicler of the mental activity of a period. This absence of the vividly personal element detracts from the interest of Evelyn's *Diary,* yet it has an interest and value of its own. It rarely gives the writer's own thoughts or predilections, but it is careful, minute, scholarly, and methodical in its descriptions of events and of persons, of places and buildings and works of art. Where he does exhibit some warmth of personal sentiment is in his loyalty to the English Church, a loyalty which is characteristic of what was best and noblest and most consistent in the Royalist party. It is this devotion which animates and redeems the coldness of critical reserve and self-repression by which so many pages of the *Diary* are coagulated and benumbed. What it loses in human interest, however, Evelyn's *Diary* gains in value to the historian of civilisation as a compendium of the culture, the technical knowledge, and artistic taste of the highest type of educated English gentlemen during the second half of the seventeenth century.

It was not till 1724 that Thomas Burnet, the Bishop's third son, published the *History of his Own Time,* written by his worthy father Gilbert, Bishop of Salisbury (d. 1715, *æt.* 72): This work is divided into two parts. The first includes the period from the accession of Charles I. to the Revolution of 1688, and of this the part previous to the Restoration is a mere sketch. The second part contains an account of the reigns of William III. and of Anne as far as the year 1713. Burnet's first idea was a gossiping history of the half-century 1660-1710; but the appearance of Clarendon's *History* exercised a somewhat sinister influence upon the design. He had the ambition of converting his book from a brick chronicle into a marble History of Clarendonian proportions. The result was perceptibly to

blunt the humorous edge of his original reporting. In his own way Burnet is often delightful; partial and journalistic, no doubt, but giving us a wonderfully lively, and on the whole not seriously inaccurate, survey of that revolutionary period. A busybody, rather obtuse than otherwise, and full of self-importance, "B." is yet patriotic above the standard of his age. He writes consistently as a Whig, but without the absurd credulity or the selfish and malignant passion which was so common among his party. Worse than any partisanship, says the pedant, is the extreme carelessness alike of manner, style, and substance which so often disfigures his pages. His prose indeed is at times so tedious and confused and so muddled by parentheses and interlocked relative clauses that it is almost impossible to interpret the precise drift of what he is saying; but through almost all the aberration of Burnet's judgment and style we shall recognise qualities as rare as they are welcome in an historian. The framework of his history is constructed upon first-hand evidence and upon personal knowledge. His historical portraits are those of men with whom he had come in close personal contact. He actually lived with the men of whom he writes; he observed their errors, their faults, and their vices; but he is a humorist and a man of the world, a competent, energetic man, with a largish horizon, and for all alike, however they may have treated him, Burnet retains a shrewd toleration, a most human and reconciling indulgence.

Burnet's *History of his Own Time* deserves a place by itself for its frank partisanship and cheerful anecdotage. The same qualities are present in a more legitimate sphere in the delightful *Lives* of the Norths. Roger North (d. 1734, *æt.* 81), son of Dudley, fourth Baron North, and brother of Francis North, first Baron Guilford, who was appointed Lord Chancellor in 1682, was not only a stout

cavalier by race, but was also closely bound by official position to the government of James II. At the Revolution he refused to take the oaths, and retired to his country estate at Rougham, in Norfolk, where he spent a vigorous old age in gardening, building, music, vindicating the memory of his brothers Francis and Sir Dudley, and writing his own autobiography. The *Lives,* first published in 1744, show the distance traversed in the biographic art since Manningham collected legal gossip in the Temple. They are written in a familiar and at times rather slovenly style, but are full of shrewdness and good stories, keen observation, and that instinct for detail so peculiar to the age of Aubrey and Pepys. North also wrote a fierce *Examen* traversing the *Compleat History* of the Whig chronicler Bishop White Kennett. His Tory predilections were certainly quite as strong as the Whig prepossessions of his opponent, and his attack on the History quite as partial and intemperate in spirit as that of the less systematic strictures of Swift upon Bishop Burnet.

Another biography of the time, unknown to the age which produced it, is the *Life* of Colonel Hutchinson, the regicide, by his wife Lucy. Born in 1620, she was the third daughter of Sir Allen Apsley, governor of the Tower. From the date of her marriage in 1638 she was wholly devoted to the husband, whose strict religious and political views she henceforth shared. At the Restoration she managed to save her husband, whose republican views had prevented his retaining office under Cromwell, but he was soon thrown into prison as a suspicious character, and died in confinement at Deal Castle. His widow devoted herself henceforth to the vindication of his character in a panegyrical *Life* (first printed 1806) which still pleases through the simplicity of its style and the single-minded affection which is the dominant *motif* of it.

Of the remaining historical writers of the age, or more

precisely, we should say, the historical essayists, the most prominent is George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, whose reputation is nicely balanced by that of Sir William Temple. The mind of Halifax was one of the loftiest and most statesmanlike in that age of grovelling factions, above which it sought continually to maintain itself fairly poised. He opposed alike the more despotic acts of Charles and the fury of the so-called Protestant opposition.[1] In his views on government he seems indeed to have had much in common with Bolingbroke in the next generation, while in regard to toleration and colonial policy he in more than one respect anticipated the broader and more luminous ideas of Burke. The miscellanies of the Marquis of Halifax, including his *Advice to a Daughter, The Character of a Trimmer, The Anatomy of an Equivalent, A Letter to a Dissenter, Cautions for Choice of Parliament Men, A Rough Draft of a New Model at Sea,* and *Maxims of State,* were published in one volume in 1700, and again in 1704 and in 1717. The famous *Character of a Trimmer* (a warm vindication of Halifax's political temperament) was written in January, 1685, in answer to an attack upon trimmers in general by Roger Lestrange in his *Observator.* Ranke justly calls Halifax one of the finest pamphleteers that ever lived, and most of the pamphlets above named

[1] He contributed more perhaps than any single man to prevent James II.'s exclusion from the throne, yet when James was King he kept entirely aloof from court and visited the seven bishops (at most of whom he laughed in his sleeve) in the Tower. After William had landed he took the lead in making him welcome and in scaring James away from Whitehall. After Somers, perhaps no one took a greater part in the definition of the Revolution Settlement. But the fact did not prevent a strong revulsion of sentiment when he discovered that William was going to abandon himself to party government and not put himself above it, and he seems to have gone as far as to exchange a letter or two with the exiled monarch.

are as pregnant with wisdom as with the pointed, ironical wit in which Halifax was one of the first of our writers to excel. Like Chesterfield or Lord Byron, Halifax prided himself on being an aristocrat. He wrote about what was going on around him as part of a great comedy. Where other writers relapse into tedious explanation or commentary he is quite content to shrug his shoulder or to raise an eyebrow, and he expresses himself throughout with the perfect ease of a fine gentleman and the nonchalance of a contemporary and associate of that prince of saunterers, King Charles II. These qualities perhaps are seen nowhere better than in his admirable *Character of Charles II.* This was not included in his miscellanies, nor was it printed until 1750, when it was issued with some fresh maxims with the consent, and probably by the desire, of his granddaughter, Lady Burlington. Like most of Halifax's pieces, however, it is probable that it had passed from hand to hand in manuscript long before it was printed.

The character of the trimmer was exemplified almost as well by Sir William Temple as by Halifax himself. But Temple looked down upon conflicting parties not so much from the standpoint of the philosophic statesman as from that of a cautious diplomatist. He was appointed English envoy at Brussels in 1665, and in 1668 was mainly instrumental in bringing about the Triple Alliance between England, Holland, and Sweden, and in the same year was appointed English ambassador at The Hague. After his return thence in 1670 he penned his interesting *Observations on the United Provinces of the Netherlands,* which remained for many years one of the most popular of political handbooks. The same might be said of his *Essay upon the Original and Nature of Government,* which is notable not only for some fine images and sensible definitions, but also as anticipating the view expressed with less caution nine years later by Sir Robert Filmer in his *Patriarcha*

(1680), that the state is the outcome of a patriarchal system, rather than of a social compact as conceived by Hooker or Hobbes. After a period of prominence as a politician of first rank, Temple was offered an embassy at Madrid, but preferred to return to the nectarines, cherries, "sheen plums," and apricots of his new seat of Moor Park, near Farnham, where he was set on a pedestal and worshipped as an oracle by his womenkind. Thither in 1689 came Jonathan Swift (*æt.* 22) in capacity of amanuensis at a salary of £20 a year, and here he first met Esther Johnson (Stella), whose mother was in attendance upon Temple's sister, Lady Giffard. Hither, too, came William III. to discuss the Triennial Bill and other important matters of state. On one of these visits William is said to have taught Temple's amanuensis the Dutch method of cutting asparagus; while Temple himself is less credibly reported to have assisted his young familiar in revising a first draught of *A Tale of a Tub.*

During the whole period of his retirement in 1681 Temple had been employed in elaborating the essays upon which his literary fame mainly rests. Six of these had appeared in 1680 under the title of *Miscellanea.* The second and more noteworthy volume, including the papers *Of Gardening, Of Heroic Virtue, Of Poetry,* and the notorious essay on *Ancient and Modern Learning,* was issued in 1692. The vein of classical eulogy and reminiscence which Temple affects in the essay last mentioned was adopted merely as an elegant prolusion upon the passing controversy among the wits of France as to the relative merits of ancient and modern writers. First broached as a paradox, the superiority of modern poets over the Greeks and Romans had been seriously maintained by Charles Perrault in a poem upon the *Siècle de Louis le Grand* which he read before the Academy in January, 1687. Fontenelle, in a lighter and far more suggestive vein,

ranged himself with Perrault in his lucid *Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes.* La Fontaine and La Bruyère took the opposite view. Boileau was extremely angry at the presumption of Perrault, but it was not until 1694 that he delivered himself magisterially on the subject in his *Reflections on Longinus.* Temple now adopted the tone without possessing a tithe of the knowledge of a Boileau, but his essay is light, suggestive, and fanciful, rather than gravely critical, and too much serious criticism has already been wasted upon it.

William Wotton was the first to enter the lists against Temple with his *Reflections on Ancient and Modern Learning,* published in 1694. Charles Boyle (afterwards Earl of Orrery), by way of championing the polite essayist, set to work to edit *The Epistles of Phalaris,* which Temple (whose opinion on such a matter was absolutely worthless) professed to regard as genuine. It was when this conjecture had been ruthlessly demolished by the learned sarcasm of Bentley that Swift came to the aid of his patron with the most enduring relic of the controversy, *The Battle of the Books.* Temple had begun to reply to Bentley, but he was now happily spared the risk of publication.

As a writer, apart from a weakness for Gallicisms, which he admitted and tried to correct, Temple, in his *Essays,* heralds a development in the direction of refinement, rhythmical finish, and emancipation from the pedantry of long parentheses and superfluous quotations. He was also a pioneer in the judicious use of the paragraph. Hallam, ignoring Halifax, would assign him the second place, after Dryden, among the polite authors of his epoch. Swift gave expression to the belief that he had advanced our English tongue to as great a perfection as it could well bear; Chesterfield recommended him to his son; Dr. Johnson spoke of him as the first writer to give cadence to the English language; and Lamb praises him delightfully in his *Essay*

on the Genteel Style. During the eighteenth century his essays were used as exercises and models. But the progress made during the last half-century in the direction of the sovereign prose quality of limpidity has not been favourable to Temple's literary reputation, and in the future it is probable that his *Letters* and *Memoirs* will be valued chiefly by the historian, while his *Essays* will remain interesting primarily for the picture they afford of the cultured gentleman of the period. A few noble similes, however, and those majestic words of consolation addressed to Lady Essex, deserve and will find a place among the consecrated passages of English prose.

Among the lesser historians and memoir-writers, Bulstrode Whitelocke (1605—1675) stands pre-eminent. He was a Commissioner of the Great Seal under the Commonwealth, and did good service to the state as ambassador to Sweden. In his retirement under the Restoration *régime* he wrote *Memorials of English Affairs from* 1625 *to* 1660, first published in 1682, and a journal of his Swedish embassy, which did not see the light until 1672. Whitelocke hardly aspires to be more than a chronicler or historical journal writer, but his work is of the utmost importance to the historian for the material which it embodies, including many state papers of importance.

A humbler compilation, made up of diurnal occurrences and cuttings from newspapers, is the *Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs* of the collector, town gossip, and antiquary, Narcissus Luttrell (1657—1732). His diary, which extends from 1678 to 1714, was first brought into notice by the dexterous use made of it by Macaulay in his History, which led to the Clarendon Press printing it in six volumes, with a rough index, in 1857. Luttrell's extensive collection of ballads is now in the British Museum Library.

Among memoir-writers proper, a not unimportant place

is held by Edmund Ludlow (1617—1692). To destroy the King and found a republic was the fixed idea of Ludlow's life, as to so many ideologists when in unsettled times the very name of republic becomes a sort of fetich. Such were the views expressed in the composition of his Swiss exile, his notable *Memoirs,* first printed in 1698-9. Narrow in outlook, plain and homely in expression, Ludlow's *Memoirs,* like those of most of the Puritan and Parliamentary apologists, form anything but enlivening reading. Within the range of the writer's own observation and experience, however, they are thoroughly honest, and their integrity is that of the earnest man with few ideas. Like another Defoe, Ludlow kept his eyes very near down to the texture of political life.[1]

William Lilly (1602—1681), who also wrote *A True History of James I. and Charles I.,* showing some power of character-drawing, is more noted for his once highly esteemed astrological writings, and for memoirs which are still highly entertaining to curiosity-hunters for the glimpses they afford of contemporary humours, bygone manners, and singular characters with whom this Restoration Mr. Sludge was brought professionally into connection. The memoirs of that distinguished virtuoso, Elias Ashmole (1617—1692), are likewise diverting by reason of their quaint egotism and minute portrayal of his strenuous conflict with the various ailments, both major and minor, to which human flesh is heir. Besides medicine this worthy antiquary studied profoundly in astrology, physics, mathematics, and heraldry. He eventually became Windsor

[1] In speaking of his antipathies he often attains a sardonic power which takes the reader by surprise. His particular account of the republican factions which first opposed Cromwell, and after his death fell foul of one another, is valuable and suggestive. Scott derived some hints from him for his effective sketch of the fifth-monarchy fanatic in *Peveril of the Peak.*

Herald, saved a nice sum of money, and by the acquisition of the Tradescant antiquities laid the foundation of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. His marriage connected him with the great antiquary of the previous generation, and one of the greatest savants in his own department that England has ever produced. This was the great Sir William Dugdale (1605—1686), a native of Warwickshire, who was educated at Coventry, and showed when little more than a boy a strong predilection for antiquarian research.[1] Sir Christopher Hatton procured him access to the Cottonian Library and the Tower records, and he was soon established as a pursuivant (Rouge Croix, 1639), and as the prospective historian of Warwickshire. His *Antiquities* of that county was eventually issued in 1656, and was hailed at once as a masterpiece of archæological and topographical research, and as a model county history for all time. In the meantime, with much help from the original projector, Roger Dodsworth (d. 1654), Dugdale had issued the first volume of his monumental *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1655), containing a vast mass of information concerning the history, biography, architecture, inscriptions, and documents of the great monastic institutions of England prior to the Reformation—a book in great demand on the Continent among the libraries of foreign monasteries, though it was looked upon sourly both by the Puritans and also by the descendants of those hungry courtiers who had either begged or purchased vast tracts of Church property at nominal prices during the reign of Henry VIII. A second volume appeared in 1661, and a third in 1673. The best edition is the greatly augmented one issued by Bandinel, Caley, and Ellis in 54 parts with 246 illustrations (the

[1] He was born, says Aubrey, at 3.15 p. m., on September 12, 1605, at which precise hour a swarm of bees pitched under his mother's chamber window as an omen of his laborious collections.

latter alone costing 6,000 guineas) in 1813. Dugdale was scarcely less fortunate in the choice of subjects of permanent interest and importance in his *History of St. Paul's Cathedral in London,* 1658, a detailed account of the church before its destruction by the great fire, and his *Baronage of England,* 3 vols., 1676, the first really adequate genealogical and biographical survey of the English nobility. In this noble series of antiquarian compilations Dugdale was materially assisted by several of the leading antiquaries of his day, including Dodsworth, Spelman, Rushworth, Somner, Aubrey, Ashmole, and Anthony à Wood. Dugdale's treatment of antiquities afforded to Wood, as he naïvely confessed, a glimpse into Elysium, and the Oxford antiquary gives us a quaint picture of their joint researches in the Cottonian Library at Westminster (in which he laments that they were only allowed to peruse two MSS. at a time), and amidst the vast store of charters and rolls in the White Tower. Dugdale was Norroy Herald from the Restoration onwards, nor did he allow his absorption in black-letter documents to interfere with the due exaction of his legitimate fees. He was, in fact, the terror of heraldic amateurs, interlopers, and evildoers. He built up a considerable estate, and Wood, whose foible was not Christian charity, suggests that his end was hastened by his over-anxiety about worldly concerns. He died on February 10th, 1686, leaving a somewhat colourless *Diary,* which was edited with his letters and other materials by William Henry Hamper in 1827.

To Dugdale's example and influence was due in no small measure the vast antiquarian output of Anthony à Wood. Born in Oxford of an old county family, Wood was educated at New College and Thame Schools, whence he passed to Merton College (in the street where his father's house was situated), first as postmaster and then as Bible-clerk. He would doubtless have succeeded to a fellow-

ship there, as his brother had done, but for his notoriously peevish temper. In politics he was a strong cavalier, but his tastes were musical and historical rather than political, and he would have probably relapsed intc a very desultory, futile, and despondent mode of life but for the keen spirit of emulation roused in him by the appearance of Dugdale's *Warwickshire.* He determined to do a book of the same kind for his native Oxfordshire, and commenced operations by perambulating the county, collecting inscriptions and noting antiquities. Eventually, however, he restricted his design to a treatise on the annals of Oxford City and University, with an account of the antiquities of the churches, colleges, and public buildings thereof. The university portion was brought out in Latin in two folio volumes in 1674 as *Historia et Antiquitates Universitatis Oxoniensis,* the text of Wood's original English version appearing for the first time under the careful editorship of John Gutch in 1791-6. The city treatise was not adequately edited until a hundred years later, when it was brought out under the auspices of the Oxford Historical Society. Wood had been greatly assisted in the biographical part of his work by John Aubrey, and with Aubrey's assistance and that of others, especially Andrew Allam, vice-principal of St. Edmund Hall, he now contemplated an elaborate biographical dictionary with a bibliography of all Oxford writers and bishops. In his history of Oxford he had been supplied with most of his material ready-made at the hands of the indefatigable Oxford antiquary of James I.'s time, Brian Twyne. The new work (*Athenæ Oxon.*) was based upon materials which had to be collected for the first time, involving an enormous amount of industry whether of research, correspondence, or bibliographical compilation. Biassed as Wood's opinions are, and censorious as are his judgments, and invaluable as was the informal assistance which he received from such men as

Aubrey, it remains perfectly marvellous that at a time when libraries and other instruments of research were in such a rudimentary state one single man should have been able to bring together such a vast *corpus* of fresh biographical material. His book, indeed, has not merely been the inspiration and exemplar of all similar works, but it has proved the core of all biographical compilation on a large scale in England from that day to this. It was issued, at a considerable pecuniary sacrifice, in two large folio volumes in 1691 and 1692, bringing the history of Oxford writers from 1500 to 1690. A very valuable edition with additional material was brought out by Dr. Philip Bliss in 1813-20, but a new edition corrected by Wood's own supplementary papers remains a desideratum.

Wood wrote of his biographical henchman John Aubrey with contemptuous ingratitude as "a man of a sparkish garb, a shiftless person, roving and maggoty-headed, and sometimes little better than crazed, who stuffed his letters with foolishness, and was often guilty of grievous misinformation." Such a description does a gross injustice to Aubrey, though it helps us to form some idea of the singularity of the man whose position among biographical antiquaries is a unique one. His curiosity had a twist in it which separated it from that of the orthodox antiquary, and this sprang from his conception that it was incumbent on him to transmit to posterity just those distinctive traits and peculiarities of the subjects which ordinary observers deem it convenient to overlook.

John Aubrey (1626—1697) was born at Easton Percy in the parish of Kington in Wiltshire on March 12th, 1626. He was sent to school with Hobbes at the house of a vicar near Malmesbury, and went on to Trinity College, Oxford; but the war interrupted his studies and he was sent home, much to his grief, to associate with grooms and servingmen at his father's house. With difficulty he persuaded

his father to enter him at the Middle Temple. In 1652 he inherited his father's lands with many debts and encumbrances, to which he steadily added until his estate was all gone. "I was never quiet till all was gone." In 1667 he began working for Wood. In 1685 he roughly stitched together his *Natural Remarques on the County of Wilts,* a quaint and breezy concatenation of chapters upon a diversity of topics: air, springs, rivers, soils, plants, diseases and cures, worthies, gardens, arts, the downs, wool, clothing trade, fairs, hawking, fatalities, accidents, and seats. These were edited by John Britton in 1847. The only work which was published in his lifetime was the *Miscellanies* of 1696, an entertaining collection of ghost-stories with other weird and impossible anecdotes of the supernatural. In June of the following year, during one of his interminable perambulations, he died, and was buried in the Church of St. Mary Magdalene at Oxford. His *Brief Lives* and other antiquarian collectanea were all eventually to find their way in manuscript into the Oxford libraries.

Aubrey began his extraordinary series of *Brief Lives,* some 400 in number, on the suggestion of, and with the desire to help, Anthony à Wood, to whom he became known in 1667, with his *History* and *Athenæ.* The idea was that after Wood had used what he required—and he often seems to have embodied whole passages from Aubrey's manuscript Lives in his *Athenæ*—the text should be returned to Aubrey, revised and polished into a more consecutive form and brought out separately. He seems to have got back his manuscript in a sadly gelded condition, as he bitterly complains in 1692, and he was much concerned thenceforth in getting opinions upon it with a view to shaping it finally for the press. Next year, however, the manuscript of the *Lives* was placed in the Ashmolean Museum, and no ade-

quate use of it was made until 1813, when the most interesting of the Lives were published; not, however, until 1898 were the *Brief Lives* published in their integrity from the originals, mainly in the Bodleian, by the Rev. Andrew Clark.

Aubrey, as we are enabled to picture him, can be described only as a delightful if incongruous blend of Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Jedediah Cleishbotham, and a descriptive reporter on a modern New York journal. With Mr. Pepys and James Boswell he is one of the three consummate Paul Prys of English letters. The biographical instinct was developed in him to an extent that is perhaps unrivalled for purity and intensity. His literary style, we must admit, was altogether unequal to his conceptions. That insatiable curiosity of his, which time had not yet vulgarised nor custom staled, had no wings wherewith to fly. It kept to the earth. Aubrey does not try to fathom or to explain greatness. He takes his heroes at the world's valuation. But he sees that, although heroes, they are still men with like absurdities to ourselves; and he points out what are to him, Aubrey, an unprejudiced and incorruptible observer, the distinctive and peculiar traits or oddities of each one of them. Hobbes was a profound philosopher, no doubt, and Aubrey shared many of his opinions, but what Aubrey was anxious to inform the world about him is that he trod both his shoes aside the same way, that he was much afflicted when bald by flies, that his favourite diet was whitings, that he wore Spanish leather boots laced up the sides with black ribbons, and that in the middle of the night, when he believed that everybody else was fast asleep, he would sing prick-song with a loud voice in order to exercise his lungs. Similarly with Milton, Spenser, Fuller, Suckling, Waller, Bacon, and Shakespeare himself, he gives us many incomparable details. Aubrey well understood

two most important axioms of the biographic art: first, the need of avoiding history and generalities; secondly, that the best of men are but men at the best.[1]

A LARGE number of minor memoir-writers, who already begin to swarm, and of autobiographers, might without difficulty be enumerated; the number of such works is constantly increasing as the dust of old libraries and other depositories of manuscripts is disturbed by emissaries of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, and their finds printed, often *in extenso*, through the diligence of the Camden or of the Chetham or other learned publishing societies. It will be sufficient here briefly to mention the names of Reresby, Bramston, Prideaux.

Sir John Reresby (1634—1689), a baronet and local magnate of weight in the West Riding, wrote an entertaining account of his doings and goings as a member of Parliament in the employment of the court between 1658 and 1688. He was a regular time-server, obsequious, yet ever ready to speak boldly for any *douceur* that he conceived to be within his reach; but though his personality is uninteresting, his close practical view of men and things is entertaining because it is so real. Reresby's special patron was the Marquis of Halifax. Among "sidelights" we have a glimpse of Charles II. priming the Prince of Orange with wine, and of the Prince getting very drunk and breaking the windows of the maids-of-honour.

Sir John Bramston (1611—1700) wrote another Royalist autobiography, which is very full through the closing period of Charles II.'s reign and contains much of purely personal interest at the time, which now by its very minuteness throws light upon the social and family history of England in Stuart times.

Of Oxford at this same period we get a pleasantly scandalous chronicle at the hands of Humphrey Prideaux (1648—1724), a good classical scholar, and extremely typical, first of a college don, and then of a garrulous dean. He was Dean of Norwich from 1702 to 1724.

Among the best letters of the period, apart from those of Halifax, Danby, Temple, Sir Edward Nicholas, and other politicians, may perhaps be mentioned *The Verney Letters* (published by the Camden Society), the Savile correspondence, the

[1] For a most diverting study of Aubrey and his art, see Marcel Schwob, *Spicilège*, 1896, 253-67.

correspondence of the Hatton family, and the perhaps somewhat overpraised epistles written by Dorothy Osborne to her future husband, Sir William Temple, between 1652 and 1654. That the personal charm of a very winning woman breathed through these letters is not, however, to be denied, and there is in addition the romance of a long and arduous courtship. T. P. Courtenay first brought these letters to light in his *Life of Temple*, and they led him to proclaim himself one of Dorothy's devoted servants; upon which act of homage, with a delightful use of the editorial plural, the incomparable T. B. Macaulay in *The Edinburgh* exclaims that "we must declare ourselves his rivals." More recently the fair Dorothy has found a devoted champion and most jealous editor in Judge Parry.

The amount of religious writing produced between 1660 and 1700 is very extensive; as, however, it is now practically unread, our survey of it must be rapid. The superior clergy of the first generation after the Restoration include the names of Gilbert Sheldon, John Pearson, John Cosin, George Morley, Brian Walton, Seth Ward, John Dolben, Herbert Thorndike, Barnabas Oley, Isaac Barrow, Robert South, Richard Busby, Edmund Pocock, Isaac Basire, and Richard Allestree, this last being the reputed author of the most famous devotional manual of the age between Jeremy Taylor and William Law (*Serious Call*), the homely and unemotional *Whole Duty of Man* (1658). Most of the divines above mentioned represent the tradition of the older Caroline Church. Their prose is somewhat stiff and stately, with old-fashioned embroidery. Pearson, for instance, whose "very dross is gold," is a representative High Churchman of the old school, and his one immortal contribution to Anglican theology is his *Exposition of the Creed* (1659). Pearson's penultimate predecessor as Master of Trinity was Isaac Barrow (d. 1677, *æt.* 47; buried Westminster Abbey), the Creighton of his time, a man of extraordinary intellectual eminence and versatility. In mathematics in that time Barrow had but one rival, John Wallis, and both Barrow and Wallis were educated at Felsted School, then at the height of its reputation under the single-minded and devoted Martin Holbeach. Among Barrow's pupils was Newton, and chief among his admirers as a preacher and controversialist will ever be remembered the great Earl of Chatham, who impressed upon his sons the importance of a style as dignified as that of Barrow. The son of a

linendraper, and so unruly as a boy that his father was wont to exclaim that, if it pleased God to take any of his children he could best spare Isaac, Barrow attained to the front rank by sheer strength of brain. He was, indeed, an intellectual athlete of the first order, and a cosmopolitan in respect to human knowledge, being equally eminent in science and linguistics, in theology and in mathematics. The first of Cambridge preachers, Barrow's rival in the Oxford pulpit was Robert South (1633—1716), pupil of two of England's most famous pedagogues, Dr. Busby and Dr. Fell (the unlucky transferee of Martial's *Epigram*,[1] i. 33), himself unrivalled for his wit in the pulpit and for his repetition of the formula "nolo episcopari." He showed his wit by preaching shorter sermons,—he was briefer by two hours than Taylor or Barrow, and correspondingly more epigrammatic. His sarcasm of Taylor's style was not wholly undeserved; "I speak the words of soberness. . . . I preach the Gospel not with enticing words of men's wisdom. Nothing here of the fringes of the North Star, nothing here of the down of angels' wings, or the beautiful locks of cherubims —no starched similitudes introduced with a 'Thus have I seen a cloud rolling in its airy mansion.' The Apostles, poor souls! were content to take lower ground." Like most of his fellows, South was a staunch and rather bitter royalist, referring to Milton once as a "blind adder." Bishop Cosin of Durham was the Pusey, the mind-manager and diplomatist of the Restored Church. Its aggressive exclusiveness is well represented by Archbishop Sheldon. He it is who was mainly responsible for that exclusion of Puritans which must ever seem disgraceful to the intelligence no less than to the Christianity of the Protestant Church of England of 1662. Anglicanism, it might then have seemed, had learned nothing and forgotten nothing. A few concessions would have won over 1,600 out of the 2,000 ejected divines. As it was, many of the best men were excluded, among them Baxter, Poole, Manton, Bates, Calamy, Brooks, Watson,

[1] "Non amo te, Sabidi, nec possum dicere quare.
Hoc tantum possum dicere: non amo te."

"I do not like thee Dr. Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this I know, and know full well:
I do not like thee, Dr. Fell."

Charnock, Caryl, Howe, Flavel, Bridge, Owen, Goodwin; many others. By common consent the first place among them falls to Richard Baxter, born at Rowton, Salop, of a family of decayed freeholders, towards the close of 1615. A conformist originally both by birth and temper, he grew too puritan for the bishops and too episcopalian for the Presbyterians. His personal holiness and extraordinary gifts as a preacher, no less than his casuistic and literary attainments, designated him for the episcopal bench, but he could not accept it upon the proffered terms, and was driven out of the Church. He found a Zoar in the village of Acton, where he had as neighbours Lord Halifax and Sir Matthew Hale. His friends were numerous and influential; but in their despite he was shamelessly persecuted, driven from pillar to post, and subjected to the lash of Jeffreys' merciless tongue. "Richard, thou art an old fellow, an old knave. Thou hast written books enough to fill a cart, and every book as full of sedition as an egg is full of meat. Hadst thou been whipt out of thy writing trade forty years ago, it had been happy. By the grace of God, I'll look after thee!"

Apart from his *Reliquiæ* (1696), which contains some of the most vivid pictures in the whole realm of autobiography, and "a whole cartload" of lesser books, Baxter wrote three great beseeching books, which are fit to rank as the masterpieces of one of the first pastoral geniuses that England has produced. These are *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (1650), *The Reformed Pastor* (1656), and *The Call to the Unconverted* (1657). Left saddened and lonely by the death of his wife, celebrated in the *Breviate* of 1681, he sought refuge from sorrow and physical pain in writing and preaching, in harness to the end, and on his death-bed "almost well." About five on the evening of Monday, December 7th, 1691, Death sent his harbinger, says Sylvester, to summon him away. A great trembling and coldness awakened nature, and extorted strong cries which continued for some time. At length he ceased, waiting in patient expectation for his change. The gentle cry in the ear of his housekeeper, "Death, death," betokened full consciousness to the last, and turning to thank a friend for a visit, he exclaimed, "The Lord teach you to die." At four o'clock next morning his long suffering was over, and "he entered on the saints' everlasting rest." Many vied in doing honour to his memory. Conformists and Nonconformists both lamented him, and accompanied his hearse

to the grave from Merchant Taylors' Hall to Christ Church. Among his many incongruous admirers was Joseph Glanvill (1636—1680), the vindicator of witchcraft (*Sadducismus Triumphatus*), and of the pre-existence of souls (*Lux Orientalis*), and the preserver of the fruitful legend of the "Scholar-Gypsy."

The second generation of Anglican divines after the Restoration was, perhaps, more eminent than the first. It included the names of William Sancroft, John Tillotson, Edward Stillingfleet, Thomas Ken, Gilbert Burnet, Humphrey Prideaux, Simon Patrick, William Beveridge, and Thomas Tenison. Brought up a Calvinist, Tillotson conformed at the Restoration, and rose by his preaching and his clear lucid English, in which he had scarcely a rival in that age, to be Dean of St. Paul's. From that position he was elevated, much against his will, to the uneasy succession of Sancroft, when that archbishop persistently refused to acknowledge the supremacy of William III. A man of a sweet, gentle, and sensitive nature, accustomed to the environment of breathless crowds, who hung upon his every word, he was unfitted for an elevation so high and so stormy as that which fell to his lot. Intellectually he was a latitudinarian, and his doctrine has been described as the shoe-horn which drew on the deism of the eighteenth century. A much stronger prelate was Pepys's "famous young Stillingfleet," whom Burnet described as "the learnedest man of his day"; educated among the liberal Cambridge schoolmen, represented by Ralph Cudworth and Benjamin Whichcote, Stillingfleet was in 1659 a strong advocate of accommodation (*Irenicum*); later on he produced his erudite *Origines Sacræ* (1662), but notwithstanding his cool head, his tolerance, and his learning, he was badly worsted in his encounter with the philosophic Locke.

Three more self-denying and devout prelates than Patrick, Beveridge, and Tenison, pioneers of the evangelical divines of the eighteenth century, could seldom be found living at one time. Yet they are eclipsed in this age by Dryden's "Good Parson" and Charles II.'s "little black fellow who refused Nelly a lodging"—the saintly Thomas Ken, Bishop of Bath and Wells. If public opinion could beatify, Ken would take a high place among the Blessed, along with Bishop Wilson, Thomas More, John Kyrle (the Man of Ross), George Herbert, Charles Dickens, and Charles Lamb. As Macaulay admits, Ken's "character approaches as near as human infirmity permits to the ideal perfection of human virtue." He survives in litera-

ture in two almost inspired Lives, and in those two beautiful hymns of Morning and Evening, "Awake, my soul" and "Glory to Thee, my God, this night." The first owes something to Flatman's *Morning Hymn*. The most faithful witness of his age, Ken refused to take the oaths, and was deprived in 1691. He died at Longleat, March, 1711, *æt.* 74, and his tomb under the chancel window of the handsome church at Frome is still a place of pilgrimage. As the last spadeful of earth was cast upon his grave, it is recorded that the sun rose and the children present sang with their clear young voices, "Awake my soul, and with the sun." The spirit of these good men is seen in the educational, religious, and philanthropic societies which sprang up and flourished so beneficently under good Queen Anne. The Societies for the Reformation of Manners, which aimed at correcting the licence of the times (so conspicuous, as already referred to, upon our comic stage), began to be formed in 1692, and in ten years' time were already enormously powerful. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was projected by Dr. Thomas Bray in 1699. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was floated by Bishops Tenison and Compton, Humphrey Prideaux, and Dr. Bray just two years later. Numerous parochial libraries and charity schools date from the same period, and exercised an unmistakable influence in extending and diffusing, and at the same time giving an excessive Puritan tinge to English Letters (see Josiah Woodward's *Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies; Life and Designs of Dr. Bray*, 1746; Nelson's *Life of Bull*, 1713; Secretan's *Life of Nelson;* Overton's *Life in the English Church*, 1660-1714; *Quarterly Review*, No. 313; Dr. Stoughton's *Church of the Restoration*, 1874; Kempe's *Classic Preachers of the English Church*, 1877; Tulloch's *English Puritanism*, 1861).

It is probable that the greatest spiritual energy of the age emanated neither from conformists nor dissenters of the old orders (Presbyterians, Independents, and Anabaptists), but from the extraordinary mystics who became known as Quakers, and whose proper place in the scheme of the universe (were they mad fanatics or the salt of the earth?) it is still so difficult to define (*cf.* Macaulay and Carlyle). Discontent with the shams of a State Church, whether Presbyterian, Episcopal, Baptist, or Independent, may have well contributed to the rise of these mystical and mysterious psychopaths. But, as with other mystics (the family likeness is notable), the con-

viction of illumination from within and direct guidance from the unseen world is their predominant feature. They have religion (conventional as far as it goes, but not very clearly emphasised or defined) in a most acute form; their belief is fixed on auto-inspiration, not in dogma or learning. George Fox (1624—1691) set the example of going about from steeple-house to steeple-house asking the priest or minister by what commission he taught and how he dared to take money for propagating error. The man in the leather breeches, who kept his hat on before magistrates and was undeterred from pursuing this course by any known discipline of stocks or stones, became a source of panic to professional pulpiteers, who fled incontinently at the very rumour of his approach. In an age of shams this cult of veracity, rooted in spiritual inwardness, and existing only in an atmosphere of antagonism, found a ready response. Fox himself had little of the spiritual genius of one or two of his fellows, such as James Nayler, Simpson, or Barclay. He was a more homely mystic, but his neuropathic absorption was sufficiently sublime, as evidenced by the story of his taking off his shoes and parading Lichfield, shouting as he went, "Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield." His *Journal*, edited by Thomas Ellwood in 1694—three years after Fox's death,—remains a book of extraordinary interest, if only as a record of human will-power and originality, apart from its unconscious humour and its vivid sidelights upon the England of Bunyan and Bishop Burnet. Ellwood as a mystic was less *exalté*, but his own *History* of his life (first published in 1714, the year after his death) gives a most graphic picture of the period of the Quaker persecution, and of the unspeakable prisons in which "the seekers" of the seventeenth century were too often immured. William Penn, in his *Fruits of Solitude* of 1693 and its various sequels, was the Solomon (or Sancho Panza) of the early Friends, with his constant relays of reflections and maxims. Robert Barclay (1648—1690) was the learned apologist of the movement. In his *Truth cleared of Calumnies*, his *Apology for the True Christian Divinity as the same is held forth and preached by the people, called in scorn, Quakers* (1678), and elsewhere he undertakes to demonstrate the possibility of the union of the soul with God—without sacraments, without councils, without bulls, without bishops, without priests, without tradition, without commentaries, without books—without intermediary of any kind

whatsoever (see Fox's *Diary*,* ed. P. L. Parker; Ellwood's *History*,* ed. Crump, 1900; Combe's *Révélation Intérieure*, 1894; W. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*).

The best edition of Burnet's *History* is that in course of publication by the Clarendon Press (Routh and Airy), with a supplement of Burnet's collected material and a commentary by Miss Foxcroft the capable editor of the Marquis of Halifax. Charles Lamb writes to Manning, "I am reading Burnet's *Own Times*. Did you ever read that garrulous pleasant history? He tells his story like an old man past political service, bragging to his sons on winter evenings of the part he took in public transactions when his 'old cap was new.' Full of scandal, which all true history is." See also Prof. A. J. Grant's *English Historians*, 1906. The standard edition of Ludlow's *Memoirs* is that of Prof. Firth, also published at Oxford, with a valuable introduction. There is an excellent three-volume edition of the *Lives of the Norths* by Canon Jessopp, with portraits and full index (Bohn). *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* was re-edited by Prof. Firth in 1885; new editions of this book and of Reresby's *Memoirs and Travels* have recently appeared among the Dryden House Memoirs (published in Gerrard Street, close by the site of Dryden's old house). The *Memoirs* of Evelyn, containing the *Diary*, were first published by William Bray in 1818-19; re-edited by Upcott in 1827, and by Wheatley in 1879 and 1906. There are recent editions in the Newnes Library, both of the *Diary* (1903) and of the *Life of Mary Godolphin* (1904). Some of Evelyn's gardening books and his *Sylva*, or discourse on forest trees, and *Pomona*, on fruit trees, of 1664, have recently been resuscitated. His travels of 1641-46 in France and Italy, as related in the *Diary*, gain in interest as illustrating the contemporary rambles of John Milton and the imaginary John Inglesant, and as exhibiting the charm of foreign travel before quick trains and cheap tourist agencies had robbed it of the last vestiges of magic.

CHAPTER V

JOHN LOCKE AND THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

"The philosophy of Locke is still the system of the English, and all their new additions to morality are saturated with his spirit."—LYTTON, *England and the English.*

The *Essay on the Human Understanding*—The Star Chamber and the Press—Some early newspapers—Newspapers and style.

JOHN LOCKE, son of a country attorney, who joined the Parliamentary side in 1642, born at Wrington, Somerset, August 29th, 1632, was educated at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford, where he became lecturer on Greek and rhetoric. Obtaining exemption, however, from taking orders, as his office prescribed, Locke devoted himself to the study of physics, and especially of medicine, with intent to becoming a doctor. After thirteen years' residence at Christ Church, in 1665, disgusted with the verbal subtleties of the Aristotelian philosophy, he went on a diplomatic mission to the Elector of Brandenburg (some interesting letters written by him from Germany on this occasion were published by Lord King in 1829). In 1666, though never having taken a degree in medicine, he practised as a kind of amateur assistant to Dr. David Thomas, and through his medical skill became an intimate friend of Lord Ashley, afterwards Earl of Shaftesbury, who attached the young scholar to his household as tutor to his son. In the Earl's house Locke was brought into the society of the most distinguished wits of the day, notably the Duke of Buckingham and the Marquis of Halifax.

In 1672, through Shaftesbury's influence, Locke ob-

tained the post of Secretary to the Board of Trade, which he only held for a year, his patrons falling out of favour.

In 1675 his health, about which he frequently consulted his friend Sydenham, being in a specially delicate state, Locke visited France, where he resided for four years—first at Montpelier, and afterwards at Paris, where he made the acquaintance of the most eminent French literary men. He returned to England in 1679, and, Shaftesbury being again in power, he acted as his private adviser; but Shaftesbury falling for the second time, they both fled to the Low Countries, where Shaftesbury died in 1683, and Locke was deprived of his studentship at Christ Church by a special order from Charles II., and denounced as a dangerous heresiarch in philosophy. During this exile his first essays appeared in Le Clerc's *Bibliothèque Universelle,* which was to be for many years the chief European organ of men of letters. The Revolution of 1688 restored Locke to his native country, and he was made a Commissioner of Appeals with a salary of £200 a year. In 1695, having aided the Government with his advice on the subject of the reissue of the coinage, he was made a member of the new Council of Trade, which office the state of his health obliged him to resign in 1700, and he resided during the last four years of his life at Oates, in Essex, the seat of his friend Sir Francis Masham, where the infirmities of his declining years were soothed by Lady Masham, daughter of Dr. Cudworth. Locke died on October 28th, 1704, and was buried at High Laver, near Oates.

Locke was a homely thinker—the only kind of thinker likely profoundly to influence the typical Englishman of the eighteenth century. His foundations in metaphysics were broad and obvious, but they were *foundations.* He tried to bring his philosophy down to the level of cheerfulness and common sense, and the obligation of practising his own philosophy was one which he emphatically did not

shirk. He was indeed one of those men like Benjamin Franklin who, without possessing any soaring spirit, yet by their constant and systematic industry, zeal for work, and concentration upon the practically useful subjects of contemplation helped to raise the standard of living about him to an extent almost incredible in a single individual. His familiar works, all of them assuming the characteristic form of pamphlets addressed to the public with a view to clearing the way towards some immediate end, might be termed the Synthetic Philosophy of the eighteenth century. Unlike a later system, however, they influenced political thinkers in the same kind of way that Burke and Adam Smith began to influence them a century later, and all the English philosophers and most of the French ones (notably Berkeley, Hume, and Rousseau) used Locke's essay as the foundation of their own speculations.

Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding* (1690, the result of twenty years' thought, for which he received £30) formed the cornerstone of his system. It is in brief a very straightforward plea for the free exercise of reason (for no province of our knowledge can be regarded as independent of reason), together with an analysis of ideas and of the language in which alone we can communicate them. He attempts to show that ideas are not innate, but are the outcome of reflection working upon the records of sensation. The reason is in consequence the one safe guide. Formulæ, doctrines, assumptions leading to acts and modes of life without ideas are the dangers from which reason is our refuge. Custom from which reason has departed is the stumbling-block of humanity.

In full harmony with the teaching of this famous essay is that of *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), in which he is at pains to demonstrate that Christianity (in which he was a firm believer) was essentially reasonable. Similarly in his *Treatise of Government* (1690) he shows

that civil government is not the outcome of a contract such as Hobbes had described, but of a free contract, in which the guiding principle must be the intelligence between governors and governed, and completely of a piece with the rest of the system is *Thoughts concerning Education* (1693), in which in an admirably lucid form he develops the distinctively English tenets that wisdom and character rather than knowledge of erudition should be the proximate aims of the teachers of youth. This pellucid and admirable rationality invaded every activity of his life. He loved order; he went about the most trifling things always with some good reasons, and he esteemed the employments of men in proportion to the good they were capable of producing. The sense of responsibility that he endeavoured to implant in every one of the obligation to prove a useful member of society became one of the root ideas in England, where the idea of *duty* acquired a significance elsewhere unknown.

We have seen in a previous chapter how printers were restricted in number by law; how it was in 1534 prohibited to import books which were printed abroad for the wholesale market in England; how functionaries were appointed to licence books, and patents granted which carried with them a monopoly of the printing of certain individual books such as the Bible, or classes of books such as law books or music books. The committee of the Privy Council, known as the Star Chamber, in 1637 increased the penalties of those who issued unlicenced books to whipping and the pillory. The Puritans, if possible, took an even stricter view of their responsibility in regard to the stamping out of objectionable books than the Cavaliers. Powers were granted by the Long Parliament to break open private houses in search of unlicenced printing presses. After the Restoration a strict system of licencing was adopted, and in 1662 it was sought to control the selling of books

by enforcing a licence from some episcopal authority. This was not carried out; but in 1663 Roger l'Estrange, a Tory stout and bitter, was appointed sole licencer of all political and periodical literature—a post which he retained with small interruption down to the Revolution of 1688. L'Estrange himself organised two small papers, *The Intelligencer* (every Monday) and *The News* (every Thursday), which he designed to tell the people of London just as much news as it was expedient for them to know. Rivalry with these two privileged organs seemed quite out of the question; but by a curious accident—the sequestration of the court at Oxford during the Plague of 1665, and the need felt by the court for an independent paper, free from all possibility of infection—*The Oxford Gazette* came into existence. L'Estrange was furious at such a contravention of his pet monopoly and privilege; but the new venture was brought out by express command of the King, and L'Estrange could do nothing to injure it. So helpless was he that at No. 24 (February 5th, 1666) *The Oxford Gazette* became *The London Gazette,* which after many vicissitudes is still with us, and commenced its career like that of an Oriental potentate by summarily destroying all its rivals.

The hampering restrictions upon the Press, with most of the laws and ideas upon which these were based, especially as to the unlawfulness of publishing rumours, came to an end in 1695. The Star Chamber had opposed a free Press on the same ground that the Catholics had opposed a free Bible. Opinions were dangerous things, and authority in such matters must be placed above reason. Now, owing largely to the spirit with which Locke had permeated the politics of the Whigs from Shaftesbury's time onwards, a silent revolution of the very greatest moment in the history of opinion and of literature as the organ of opinion was effected.

On May 3rd, 1695, the law which had subjected the Press

to a censorship expired. "A great experiment was making. A great revolution was in progress. Newspapers had made their appearance." It was not, of course, a first appearance, as the vivacious expression of Macaulay might almost lead one to suppose. Gazettas (so called after a small coin) originated in North Italy during our Elizabethan period, and in 1622 Nathaniel Butter had brought out in London a regular numbered journal called *The Weekly News,* hardly distinguishable in its appearance or contents from the popular broadsheets and pamphlets containing intelligence of robberies, executions, or foreign events which had already been common enough. It is true enough, however, that the seventeenth-century "Gazettes," "Diurnals," "Mercuries," and "Observators," though their importunity was severely mocked by the dramatists (especially Ben Jonson in *Staple of News* and Fletcher in *Fair Maid of the Inn*), had been of very little account. Until 1695 the Press had been effectually muzzled. A new era started for journalism with *The Daily Courant* of 1702, printed on one side only, as it was "to spare the public at least half the impertinences of ordinary journalism."

During the eighteenth century, what with the stringent laws of privilege and libel and crushing taxation dating from the stamp duty of 1712 (the "fall of the leaf"), the Press was still subjected to extraordinary disabilities and forfeits. Nevertheless, very few years elapsed before something like a journalistic *flair* was manifested by men like Roper and Boyer; much higher qualities were exhibited by exponents such as Addison, Swift, and that born journalist Daniel Defoe. Later in the century commercial, industrial, financial, and managerial capacities of the very highest order were devoted to the Press by such men as Walter, Perry, and Daniel Stuart. Changing its uniform perpetually, represented now by a flight of "Postmen," "Postboys," "Flying Posts," and "Daily Posts," now by

The Review, The Examiner, The Tatler, and *Spectator,* a little later by a crop of "Journals"—Defoe's, Mist's, the Grub Street and the Covent Garden, famous for its connection with Henry Fielding—the Press has all along maintained a steady upward course of almost continuous and uninterrupted progress. Johnson and Smollett, associated as they are with *The Gentleman's Magazine, The Rambler, The Idler, The Craftsman, The Critical, The Monthly, The Briton* (with its more famous antidote, *The North Briton*), were two of the chief pillars of journalism in mid-eighteenth century. Then came the era of *The Public Advertiser* and *The Public Ledger,* followed by *The Morning Chronicle, The Morning Herald, The Morning Advertiser,* and *The Morning Post*—serving to show that at each succeeding epoch in journalism there is one predominant catchword.

The Sun and *The Star* were in those days both highly reputable papers; but when the century closed the three foremost competitors for popular favour were *The Morning Chronicle* (Whig), *The Courier* (Ministerialist), and *The Times.* With the aid of a somewhat motley bodyguard of rebels and insurgents—Defoe, Smollett, Wilkes, Woodfall, Junius, Horne Tooke, Shelley, Cobbett, the Hunts, the Hones, and the Hetheringtons—the British Press through all these changes and chances made its way gradually and slowly but surely to a position of complete emancipation from Governmental control; while its relief from pillage was achieved in successive instalments by the substantial reduction of the Stamp Duty in 1836 and its total abolition in 1855. The abrogation of the Paper Duties about six years later removed the last of the so-called taxes upon knowledge.

Despite the depths of degradation to which it had been reduced by Sir Robert Walpole, who manipulated it systematically—now bribing heavily with secret service money,

now thumb-screwing with fine and imprisonment—the Press had all this time been gaining in reputation, and more and more impressively assuming the *rôle* of the great liberator and emancipator. Originally little more than a town crier, it was preparing with more and more plausibility to assume the robes of the prophet.

THE mechanical improvements effected towards the close of the eighteenth century increased the constituency of the Press from thousands to millions, and what had hitherto been a vast potentiality became almost at once (it was first seen clearly in the United States of North America) an immense power. When the transformation was accomplished, it was seen that the effects of this power were very different from what had been anticipated. They were also much more comprehensive; the transformation affecting society at war[1] quite as much as society at peace, and profoundly influencing not only trade, politics, and the traffic of everyday life and conversation, but also religion, justice, science, art, amusements, the drama, and, by no means least, literature. Because the newspapers had freed debates and helped to discredit the gross tyranny and jobbery of the parliamentary majority under George III. and his wirepullers, it was thought that the Press would become a prime agent of political freedom; because it had been in general strongly opposed to religious intolerance, it was thought that it would stimulate to a high degree independent and individual opinion; because it was the work to a large extent of men from the lower middle class who showed themselves to possess brains, it was thought that it might become an advocate of (that heterodox and anti-British conception), a fra-

[1] "Most modern wars may be ultimately traced to national antipathies which have been largely created by newspaper invectives and by the gross partiality of newspaper representations. As the writers have no part in the dangers, while by the increased circulation of their papers, they reap a large harvest from the excitement of war, they have a direct interest in producing it. Wherever there is some vicious spot, some old class hatred, some lingering provincial antipathy, a newspaper will arise to represent and to inflame it." (Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, chap. xi.).

ternity of wit. But in all these matters expectation has been pretty completely falsified. Instead of emancipating, the Press (as most would agree) has done much to enslave individual opinion, while as to public opinion it stage-manages that to suit what must be regarded as primarily the interest of the capitalist class; it arranges the political limelight in such a way as to foster the popular delusion that the two great parties in the State are bruising each other for the popular benefit; it inflates the importance of those debates, which are more often than not but a feeble echo of its own; it stultifies diplomacy by its indiscretions; aggravates popular and national prejudices, and exaggerates village games into imperial shows. Exaggeration has, in fact, become to such an extent the normal tone of the Press as to expose it very seriously to the charge of "vulgarising the national mind." The grave and censorious airs of its didactic youth have been pretty generally dropped, and the Press has acted in all these ways as an intensifier of popular tendencies and failings. Liberation writ large is promised in general terms as the ultimate objective of Press activity, but in the pursuit its forces are very soon reduced to become the passive instruments of every kind of subsidiary agitation. The "papers" work hard, it must be confessed, to condone the two besetting sins of English society in the twentieth century—the two ugly vices, avarice and cowardice. With such nicety does it register the form and pressure of an age of frivolity that the public is in chronic danger of a surfeit—even of football and *faits divers*, both excellent things in their way; book-chat has become a burden, while the petitesses of philanthropic peeresses, song and dance comediennes, successful jockeys, and the reigning buffoons of bench and pulpit are degraded to the anecdotal value of "ten-a-penny." By such proceedings four-fifths of the Press at least incurs grave peril of becoming what the foreign and American Press has already become—not so much a watchword as a byword—a laughing-stock!

The venal Press of Walpole's time has risen superior both to blackmailing and to bribery—no Press could be freer from anything approaching to corruption in this respect than ours. Yet all this time it cannot be concealed that in the long run its commendation is virtually assured for every enterprise, whether it be a theatre, a book, a church, a charity, or business concern, subject to the one necessary condition that capital be extensively invested in it. It becomes in the

ultimate analysis the champion of every strong vested interest. Automatically, without the intervention of any gross agency such as bribery, our Press strengthens in every way the hands of the upper class, who in England direct everything, absorb everything, pay for everything, disguise everything. Like the "Reformed Parliament" and the "New Police," the free and independent Press has become a bulwark of the system by which all power is concentrated in upper-class hands—the more effectually since, to all outward appearances, borough-mongering and bribery are as extinct as the dodo and the avenues to every kind of distinction in England are absolutely free.

Of anything in the nature of intelligent guidance of the humbler classes, the labouring poor, the exploited, the downtrodden, and the impenetrably stupid, the English Press has no idea. When it has supplied the mob with the latest cricket, the latest football, the latest police news, and the latest racing, it thinks it has done as much as can be expected. It is not a philanthropic concern, of course, the Press. Primarily, each newspaper is a perfectly independent going business concern, representing ordinarily a large amount of capital, the value of which is estimated by the extent of the paper's popularity. Nevertheless, having regard to the large part which the imagination must play in the healthy activity of the mind, and to the need that there is in the imagination for altruistic and patriotic stimulus, one cannot but regard the neglect of the altruistic emotions by the modern newspaper Press as a source of considerable danger to the commonwealth.

With all its defects, the British Press has rendered great services to this same commonweal, and it is a common opinion among unprejudiced persons that the benefits due to it have outweighed the abuses to which it has shown itself liable. When, however, we confine ourselves to the direct influence which the Press has produced upon English literature, with which we are more nearly concerned, this common opinion is no longer tenable. It can hardly be denied that the effect of the newspaper Press upon our literature has been preponderantly bad.

In the first place it tends to make the literature of the passing moment even more ephemeral than it ordinarily would be. It is the Press that consecrates such phrases as "the book of the week," "the book of the season," and that enshrines in

the place of literature the credentials of celebrities and the memoirs of "men (and women) of the time." Every one knows what is implied by "a newspaper general," "a newspaper statesman," "a newspaper lawyer," or "a newspaper divine." To the modern journalist, as to the modern actor, the part is greater than the whole. A pungent extract is more effective than a new point of view; a snapshot has more actuality than an artistic composition. By the praise of such qualities, which make good copy, the Press warms up numbers of ephemeral fragments into heterogeneous books. For a serious work, it instinctively feels and sometimes ingenuously admits its incapacity. We have a good instance of this in the treatment accorded by *The Athenæum* to Herbert Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy*. Briefly speaking, the newspaper distracts the public, and by feeding it with *hors d'œuvres* and *rélevés* unfits it for a more sustained course. Instead of being something new that is of value to the world at large, literature is degraded to a disproportionately increasing extent to subserve the distraction known as "reading," by acting as an anodyne to the monotony of the life of machine drivers—the monotony to which so many of the vices of our town dwellers are attributed, and to which so many of the evils of modern life are so incontrovertibly due. For a great portion of the nineteenth century it will be readily admitted that the Press (through the agency of such organs as the *Edinburgh* and *Saturday* Reviews) exercised a strong deterrent influence upon triflers and amateurs in letters. Its unsympathetic attitude won for it a reputation of ferocity, and it has now gone to the opposite extreme. It welcomes everything on condition that its vogue does not outlast a single season. Remarkable as the managerial capacity displayed by English journals has been—their enterprise in getting best news and best comments—the amount of space it has found for pure literature has hitherto been small. Latterly, however, it has followed continental example in admitting alike *contes*, *romans*, and literary papers. The free library, funereal in most of its effects upon literature, has hitherto combated the monopolising influence of the Press with some success. But the larger is evidently destined to swallow up the less, and the newspaper will eventually supersede the book altogether as far as the great mass of the population are concerned. The dream of popularising the first of the arts is already exploded, and the study of literature in

its highest sense must inevitably become restricted more and more to the small elements in our Anglo-Saxon population in whom the power of artistic appreciation is actively developed.

In one respect the collective Press of the English-speaking world has been gravely maligned. The popular view that the purity of the English language is endangered by slovenly writing in the Press is diametrically opposed to the facts of the case. Slovenly writing is committed not to the columns of the Press (which are criticised with Argus eyes both before, by the pick of professional readers, and after publication by all and sundry) but to the pages of long-winded academic studies—to books by scientific experts who are not expert with the pen, and to the increasing multitude of books by amateur authors who happen to be notorieties. Cacophonies, tautologies, and solecisms of grammar have no effect whatever upon the reputation of these worthies. They would be simply fatal to that of a skilled workman upon the Press. The standard of workmanship and *esprit de corps* among members of this body is high, and when once a form of expression or a grammatical usage is recognised by a leading authority in the Press to be objectionable, it is stamped out quite mercilessly (one of the earliest precisians and reformers in this respect was that greatest of all our journalists, Jonathan Swift), and with a severity which makes small allowance for the catholicity of our older English literature in such matters. Far from degrading the English speech, the Press operates far more than any other agency to purify and to unify it.

CHAPTER VI

DEFOE

"Les livres de De Foe ne sont que le développement des deux supplications de l'humanité: 'Mon Dieu, donnez-nous notre pain quotidien;—mon Dieu, préservez-nous de la tentation!" Ce furent les paroles qui hantèrent sa vie et son imagination."—M. SCHWOB, *Préface à "Moll Flanders."*

Early education—*The True-born Englishman*—Political pamphlets—*Robinson Crusoe*—A great mystifier—Minor novels—Defoe's realism.

DANIEL DEFOE was born in St. Giles's, Cripplegate, in the year of Charles II.'s joyful Restoration. Whether he was born shortly after or shortly before the exact date of that auspicious event is still uncertain, but the latest authorities incline to the winter of 1659-60. Daniel's father, James Foe, a butcher of Fore Street, was a younger son of a substantial yeoman farmer of Northamptonshire. (Disliking a monosyllabic surname, the writer changed his name to Defoe about 1703.) As a boy, in the streets about Smithfield Daniel observed the secrets of basket and candle-making, which he turned to such good purpose in *Robinson Crusoe*. Already he evinced a desire to talk with seamen and soldiers about "the great sea-fights or battles on shore that any of them had been in." He must have heard, too, many relations of the wars of Oliver's time, also of the Great Plague, and of the Great Fire, which occurred when he was five and six respectively. He may well have had pointed out to him the blind poet Milton, whose house in Bunhill Row was little more than a stone's-throw from Fore Street. The fact that he was

intended for the Nonconformist ministry implied that he had a thoroughly good educational grounding (in the academy at Newington Green) by Charles Norton, "a rank Independent," both in languages and logic. But Daniel drew back and went into business as a hose-factor (or dealer in and exporter of stockings) in the early 'eighties. On January 1st, 1684, being already in business, he married Mary Tuffley, aged twenty, of St. Botolph's, Aldgate. He was a thorough-going Nonconformist in politics, a supporter of Oates and his Protestant perjurers in 1680, while it is stated, somewhat improbably, that he was "out" with Monmouth in 1685 and had to leave England. It is certain that in 1688 he joined William's army in its advance on London.

Shortly after this Defoe's business went smash, and for a time he disappeared from London, though he managed by extraordinary diligence to make a composition with his creditors and eventually to pay many of them in full. Even at this time his pen was far from idle, and it was now that he wrote his remarkable *Essay upon Projects* (1688), containing suggestions for a national bank, for a system of assurance, for friendly societies, for pension offices or savings banks, for idiot asylums, for a reform of the bankruptcy laws, and for various academies. Many of these suggestions were already, it is true, in the air; most of them anticipate later ameliorations in our social system. In 1695 he obtained a small government appointment, and soon after he became a profitable shareholder in some brick and pantile works at Chadwell, near Tilbury. He removed thither from Hackney, set up a coach, and began rapidly paying off his debts. He was apparently established at Tilbury by 1696 or 1697, and in that year he commenced political pamphleteer with a trenchant pamphlet in support of William's design of maintaining a standing army. In 1700 appeared his wonderful metrical satire, *The True-*

born Englishman. John Tutchin had accused William of being an alien Dutchman in a doggerel poem called *The Foreigners.* Defoe was "filled with a kind of rage," and retorted in *The True-born Englishman,* a satire, dated January, 1701, and opening with the famous lines:

> Wherever God erects a house of prayer,
> The devil always builds a chapel there.

In a preface, which is a model of clear and forcible writing, Defoe disclaims metrical correctness and explains his object, which is to convince his countrymen of the expediency of living up to their reputation of being good-natured, and to point out the absurdity of the English, who were a nation of mongrels compounded of the off-scourings of Europe in all ages, posing as a pure and ancient race and despising foreigners as such. "What they are to-day, we were yesterday, and to-morrow they will be like us." Defoe made a thousand pounds by this artful lampoon on his fellow-countrymen, and was astonished by its success, which had had no parallel since the appearance of *Hudibras.*

The satire naturally brought Defoe high into favour with William, and William's death in March, 1702, was a serious blow to Defoe. The friends of Queen Anne were among the Tories and high-fliers, and she herself was a strong Churchwoman. A favourite measure of the High Church party at this time was a bill to suppress the practice by which dissenters conformed and took the Anglican communion just for the purpose of qualifying for a place or an appointment, and then relapsed promptly into dissent. Defoe himself disapproved of this practice as savouring of equivocation, though it was connived at by the dissenting ministers. He hated much more, however, the spirit of intolerance by which the High Church policy

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was animated, and in December, 1702, he published his pamphlet called *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters,* which, as a piece of naked irony, approaches almost to the level of Swift. Writing ironically in the guise of an extreme Churchman, he shows with indignation how the Church has been steadily humiliated for fourteen years. Fines were useless; the proper remedy was a law that whoever was found at a conventicle should be banished or sent to the galleys and the preacher promptly hanged. The stupidity of faction is such that both the parties entirely misinterpreted Defoe's intention. Both sides were furious when they discovered that they had been fooled by a satirist and a trimmer. A reward was offered for the apprehension of Defoe, who finally surrendered, was fined, sentenced to imprisonment during the Queen's pleasure, and ordered to stand three times in the pillory. His standing in the pillory proved a triumph, for the people formed a guard, covered the pillory with flowers, and drank his health. But he had to go back to Newgate, and his business was ruined.

As he had talked with soldiers and seamen in his boyhood, so now in prison he talked with murderers, thieves, and harlots, and gathered the material for his criminal romances. While still in Newgate, on February 19th, 1704, he began the famous periodical known as *The Review,* a paper which lasted till 1713, and was the immediate forerunner of the *Tatler, Spectator,* and other periodical issues. Apart from the dynasty which he thus founded, *The Review* is a marvel of single-handed journalism. In strength, agility, and fertility as a journalist, Defoe has probably had few rivals. Leigh Hunt might perhaps be named as one. A little later in this same year (1704) Harley, having scented out Defoe as a pamphleteer whom a party might well be proud of, released him from his bondage, sent a large supply of money for the relief of

his wife and children, and bade him prepare for secret service. One of his chief employments during the years that followed was a mission to the north with the object of removing national prejudices against the Union of England and Scotland.

Defoe's political preoccupations were already on the wane by 1719, in which year he discovered a new and untried source of income. He was already an adept in what we might call the *faits divers* department of journalism, and with amazing fertility and seriousness he wrote, as it were upon oath, on every topic likely to attract public curiosity. His power had already been shown in comparative trifles such as *The History of the Great Storm, Mrs. Veal's Ghost,* and a queer imaginary history of an earthquake in St. Vincent. In April, 1719, he published *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner,* founded upon the actual experience of one Alexander Selkirk, a Scots sailorman who had lived alone on the island of Juan Fernandez from 1704 to 1709, when he was released by Captain Woodes Rogers. Selkirk's history was related by Rogers in his *Cruising Voyage Round the World,* 1712, by Edward Cooke in his *Voyage to the South Sea Trade,* and more briefly and popularly from Selkirk's own lips by Steele in *The Englishman* for December, 1713. Defoe must have been familiar with this last account (which he supplemented from some well-fingered books in his library —the voyages of Hakluyt, Purchas, Knox, Vilault, Le Duc, Pitman) when he sat down quietly at Stoke Newington to write his "strange surprising" masterpiece, a world's favourite from that day to this, and in its own class, that of prose fiction, second in point of time to *Don Quixote.* The name of Crusoe he took from an old schoolmate—the name is still familiar at Lynn. Its suc-

cess was instantaneous. It was provided with a sequel, pirated at Dublin, abridged, put in a serial, imitated, moralised and translated into French and other tongues (there are more than forty imitations in Germany, where the original is still very popular)—all by 1720.

The writing of *Crusoe* had involved Defoe in no unusual effort; he was not the man to be caught in anything, not even in the web of his own imagination. It was as much a matter of routine to him to turn out his 2,000 words *per diem of* good, reliable, workmanlike prose as it is for a leading journalist at present to produce four leaders and as many reviews per week, in addition to a "weighty" magazine article every other month. Crusoe's island had the same stimulating effect upon Defoe and his imagination as the Château d'If had upon Dumas. It was highly unlikely that he should ever find again a theme which should arouse so many of the boyish lusts that lurk in every boy-grown man: the lust for wrecks and rafts and ambushes, and firearms remorselessly used against hordes of savages, or, delicious thought! cannibals—the more mature lust for property and the spectacle of its turning sand into gold. But if Defoe did not fully succeed again (in doing what was in point of fact impossible) it was not for lack of trying; nor was it due to his letting the grass grow under his feet. Henceforth he poured forth novels and narratives at an unprecedented pace down to 1725. He was then sixty-five years old and might be expected to require a little rest. Moreover, the market was for the time exhausted.

In spite of all his marvellous industry, Defoe seems to have had losses towards the end of his life, and he appears to have been in a far from prosperous state when he died in Ropemaker's Alley, Moorfields, on April 26th, 1731. He was buried in the Nonconformist *campo santo* of Bun-

hill Fields, where a column was erected to his memory in 1870.[1]

Defoe's tales seem clearly upon the surface to be lineal descendants of the Spanish *novela picaresca;* but it is not likely that Defoe directly owed very much either to Mendoza or to his English imitators. These fictitious narratives are mainly concerned either with travel or with crime, and for models he had travel-diaries, criminal confessions, and autobiographical memoirs. The most distinctly picaresque of his novels are *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jacque.*

As a writer, Defoe was essentially a true-born Englishman, thoroughly homely and racy of the soil. His congeners are Latimer, Foxe, Bunyan, Swift, Franklin, Tom Paine, Cobbett, Dana, Runciman. If we have a national novel, it is *Robinson Crusoe.* It is to Defoe what *Don Quixote* was to Cervantes. Defoe resembles Smollett in

[1] "A great mystifier, mole-like, working fiercely underground, and enjoying the concealment of his proceedings"—we know his outward form best from the proclamation offering reward for his arrest. It describes him as of middle size and spare build, with dark complexion and hair beneath the wig, grey eyes, hook nose, sharp chin with a large wen near the mouth. Of his tastes and habits his works reveal much; we know he was "a great reader and had a fine library of his own; not a great talker, save probably on occasion, when his love of quotation and his great range of book-learning was marked. Of a healthy palate, no smoker, a lover of fine dress, exceeding neat and clean, a good waterman (he kept his own pleasure boat), an excellent gardener, chosen, to help Queen Mary to lay out her gardens at Kensington. He liked a good house and everything roomy, plain, and comfortable about him. His writing is remarkably neat, clear, upright, and round with a certain elegance that bespeaks his complete mastery of his fingers. He uses shorthand and many contractions, for he was a man that had large masses of copy to turn out, and could depend, for the most part, on no one but himself" (from York Powell's privately printed *Appreciation,* 1897).

the skilful use that he makes of figures, statistics, and general information of the most varied character. The tone of much of his writing and that of Smollett's travels is curiously identical. Defoe's style is a perfect mirror of the most positive-minded of our writers. He writes for the pioneers, workers, the mariners, the Caleb Garths of the English nation, and for primitive man the world over; his style might perhaps be described in a word as colonial, the negation of culture or affectation, the essence of economy, utility, plainness, and practicality. He lacks form almost entirely; he is as amorphous as life itself. And he aims not at any technical perfection, but at the objective of every feuilletonist—the market; for value received he is at pains to ascertain what the public want and to let them have it.

It seems at first sight extraordinary that Defoe should have written, or at least published, his first and best fiction at the mature age of sixty. But Defoe was a born writer, and an absolutely equable one. We know nothing from his pen that bears the marks of immaturity. We know nothing that shows the signs of age or waning power. His work seems uninfluenced alike by enforced rapidity or by the pressure of untoward circumstances. Nothing seemed able to reduce his energy or volume until it was finally stopped forever by the numbing approach of death. He could write anything at any time, and make the best of anything in which neither a lively imagination, a delicate sensibility, a keen humour, a playful irony, a tender passion, nor a profound pathos was indispensable. Of some of these faculties he was by no means wholly devoid, but what he possessed of them as a whole was not much more than a glimmering. Where he excelled was in plain, straightforward story-telling, in understanding and appraising the curiosity of the man in the street, and in possessing just the knowledge, and just the patience, and

just the knack which would enable him most effectually to satisfy it. He was the first and cleverest of all descriptive reporters, for he knew better than any of his successors how and where to throw in those irrelevant details, tricks of speech and circumlocutions, which tend to give an air of verisimilitude to a bald and unconvincing narrative—the funny little splutterings and *naïvetés* as of a plain man who is not telling a tale for effect, but striving, after his own manner, to give you the plain, unvarnished truth. The vast and real superiority of *Robinson Crusoe* is due, we believe, exclusively to the Selkirk story which Defoe had the luck to encounter, the sense to appreciate, and the alertness to annex—a plot or fable so intrinsically interesting to every human being that it would raise by from twenty to thirty per cent. the power of any writer who was worth his salt.[1] That of Defoe in particular it raised much more, for it exactly suited his peculiar idiosyncrasies, it stimulated his rudimentary imagination and the better qualities of his latent (as opposed to his powerful, but somewhat obvious) humour; it showed to the best advantage his marvellous power as a realist, his extraordinary sense of circumstantiality, his occasional gift of introspection, his amazing actuality.

Duncan Campbell (1720), the story of a deaf and dumb soothsayer and quasi-impostor, is told with all the "log-book" minuteness characteristic of Defoe; the story is interrupted, however, by disquisitions on the deaf and dumb problem, on necromancy, apparitions, and the like.

The Memoirs of a Cavalier (1720) is an autobiographical narrative of wars from 1632 to 1648 told by an ancestor of Dugald Dalgetty, a supposed Shropshire gentleman who shared in the rout at Marston Moor and gives what appears to be a very vivid account of it all in the words of an eyewitness.

[2] The magic of "The Wreck" is surely unapproached in the whole of prose fiction. By the side of it what narrative does not appear artificial?

Chatham believed this to be a genuine historical narrative and by far the most interesting on its subject. After *Crusoe* and *Moll* it is the most interesting of his novels. It was (many believe) wholly the invention of Defoe.

The Life, Adventures, and Piracies of the Famous Captain Singleton (1720) is a clever and carefully compiled tale of adventure in the galleys, at Goa, in Madagascar, and so across the Dark Continent to the Gold Coast. The hero runs everything, including piracy on the high seas, upon a working and commercial basis, and emerges at the end with a handsome competency.

In *Moll Flanders* (January, 1722) Defoe attains a higher level in the delineation of the very methodical swindler and thief, five times a wife, who relates her past life from the vantage-ground of a hollow reformation, unaccompanied by any restitution of dishonest gains. Defoe seems thoroughly at home in Petticoat Lane, and he is always better when he is dealing with externals and mercenary motives rather than with psychological analysis.

The unsurpassed realism of his *Journal of the Plague Year* (March, 1722) makes this in some respects his masterpiece. He places the narrative in the mouth of a sober citizen and saddler of London. He intensifies both the climax of horror and the suddenness of relief, but he is in a general way extraordinarily accurate, and Dr. Mead was in the habit of referring to the book as the recognised authority by a contemporary. Repetitions, contradictions, shrugs and hints and notes of interrogation are introduced with signal art to give an air of verisimilitude. In elaborating his circumstantial detail Defoe chooses the simplest, plainest language at his command, and seldom fails to attain the documentary dulness of unsophisticated truth.

Colonel Jacque (December, 1722) is a male counterpart to *Moll Flanders*. The early pickpocket days of the hero are the best part, and form, says Lamb, one of the most affecting natural pictures of a young thief ever drawn. The portions describing his work as a white slave and then as an overseer on a Virginian plantation, though interesting and enlightened in view, are not nearly so lifelike.

The Fortunate Mistress known by the name of Roxana in the Time of Charles II. (March, 1724) is a very characteristic work. It describes the adventures of a very luxurious

courtesan, but there is not a syllable of voluptuousness in it. As a revelation of Defoe *intime* the book is almost without a rival, and after *Moll Flanders* and the *Cavalier* it is perhaps the most entertaining of his minor novels.[1] This vein having been exhausted, Defoe returned between 1724 and 1727 to the topics of his earlier days—"projects" of social and economic reform. Among these may be noted his amusing *Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business*, a diatribe against the insolence of servants, and his tradesmanlike *Use and Abuse of the Marriage Bed.* About the same time he wrote his excellent *Tour through Great Britain* (3 vols., 1724-6), which gives us an unrivalled indication of the state of the country, its industries and middle class during the early Brunswick period, his *Plan of English Commerce* and his *Complete English Tradesman.*[2]

[1] His shorter stories or tales include *Captain Avery* (December, 1719), *Life of Cartouche* (1722), *Narrative of J. Sheppard* (November, 1724), *Jonathan Wild* (June, 1725), *Captain John Gow* (June, 1725—the original of Scott's *Pirate*). On July, 1704, he published a characteristic, very solemn account of the *Great Storm* of the previous November.

[2] There are lives of Defoe by G. Chalmers, W. Wilson, W. Chadwick, William Lee (1869),* W. Minto, H. Morley, Thos. Wright, W. Whitten, and Albinia Wherry. There are excellent editions of the works, ed. Hazlitt, in Bohn's Library, and ed. G. A. Aitken (*Romances and Narratives*, 16 vols., 1895). See also the studies or sketches by Lamb, Hazlitt, Roscoe, John Forster, William Minto, Leslie Stephen, and the late Prof. York Powell, to whom the writer is indebted for several suggestions in this chapter. Of the *Journal of the Plague Year, being Observations or Memorials of the most remarkable Occurrences, as well public as private, which happened in London during the last great visitation in 1665. Written by a Citizen who continued all the while in London*, a charming edition was brought out by the London antiquary, E. W. Brayley, in 1839. After *Robinson Crusoe* no work represents the grave morality of Defoe or his air of irrefragable authenticity better than this. What confers such a peculiar lustre upon *Robinson Crusoe* is its European fame and influence. It is the pioneer of the exotic school in fiction. It is a new *Odyssey.* Rousseau praises it as an ideal treatise of natural education. The conti-

nent regards Robinson as typifying the best qualities of the English race. It does more than this, it typifies all the best prime qualities of the white man.

There are two curious anticipations in rough outline of the central motive of *Robinson Crusoe;* one is the *Effets surprenants de la Sympathie* of Marivaux, written in 1713, in which the life of a solitary upon an island is fantastically described; the other is *Voyages et Aventures de Jacques Massé,* published in 1710. In this strange and little-known book a boat's crew escape from a wreck near St. Helena. The narrator and one companion make for the interior, they get lost, and subsist for a long time on the shore in a very Crusoe-like manner. Eventually they rejoin their companions and have some fierce battles with the natives. Massé is a casuist rather of the Robinsonian pattern. After many adventures as a slave at Algiers and so forth, he reached London in 1694, and it was there that he wrote his travels. For some interesting remarks upon the cosmopolitan influence of the author of *Robinson Crusoe* the reader is referred to Texte's *Cosmopolitisme Littéraire,* 1895, and to André Le Breton's *Le Roman au dix-huitième Siècle,* 1898.

CHAPTER VII

ALEXANDER POPE

"If to have added more phrases to our language than any other but Shakespeare, if to have charmed four generations make a man a great poet, then Pope is one. . . . In the *Essay on Criticism* the wit and poet become apparent. It is full of clear thoughts, compactly expressed. In this poem, written when Pope was only twenty-one, occur some of those lines which have become proverbial, such as: 'A little learning is a dangerous thing!' 'For fools rush in where angels fear to tread.' In these we notice that terseness in which (regard being had to his especial range of thought) Pope has never been equalled."—LOWELL, *My Study Windows.*

"Whatever else the poets of Pope's time could do, they could not sing. They are the despair of the anthologists. Here and there among the brilliant reasoners, *raconteurs*, and satirists in verse, occurs a clever epigrammatist like Prior or a ballad writer like Henry Carey, whose 'Sally in our Alley' shows the singing, and not talking voice, but hardly the lyric cry. . . . As the master had made it an axiom to avoid what was mean or low, so the disciples endeavoured to escape from what was common. This they contrived by the ready expedient of the periphrasis. They called everything something else."—HENRY A. BEERS, *English Romanticism.*

Lisping in numbers—*Pastorals*—Translation of Homer—*The Rape of the Lock*—The *Dunciad*—Essays and Satires—Pope's contemporary fame and posthumous influence.

ALEXANDER POPE, the son of a Lombard Street linen-draper of the same name, was born in London on May 21st, 1688. He was a cripple from birth, and further difficulties were thrown in the way of his career by the fact of his being a papist, which precluded his entering

the universities or taking advantage of any of the high roads to eminence. The boy, however, early showed a marked predilection for poetry. He says of himself with regard to his early attempts at versification that he "lisped in numbers," and that he could not remember the time when he began to make verses. Dryden's poetry seems to have specially appealed to him, and, when only twelve years old, he asked to be taken to Will's Coffee-house to catch a glimpse of the great man who was there enthroned. Pope received his first instruction in the classics from Taverner, a Romish priest, who taught him the rudiments of Greek and Latin together. From the care of Taverner, he was removed to a school at Twyford, near Winchester, and again to another school near Hyde Park Corner, from neither of which he seems to have derived much good. Finally, at the age of twelve, Pope took his education into his own hands and set about completing a plan of study which he had devised for himself. His father had retired from a very successful business about 1700 and had gone to live at Binfield, a pleasant country retreat in Windsor Forest. It was here that Pope studied to become a poet. He read and wrote with equal assiduity and made translations of many of the classics, one of which, his translation of the first book of Statius's *Thebais,* written at the age of fifteen, he afterwards revised and printed (1712). About the same time he composed his collection of *Pastorals,* literary exercises in a smoother and more regular type of verse, which were published in Tonson's *Miscellany* of 1709, and won from the public much applause. His adaptations of Chaucer's *Prologue to the Wife of Bath* and *January and May* and his translation of Ovid's epistle of *Sappho to Phaon* were also written (the little poet affirmed) before he was sixteen. "From the age of sixteen," says Johnson, "the life of Pope as an author may be properly computed." His *Pastorals* were

handed about in manuscript among the critics and poets of the time, and Pope became acquainted with some notable men, whose advice had some influence on the formation of his style. These were William Walsh, whom Dryden designates "the best critic in the nation"; Sir William Trumbull, formerly Secretary of State, a man well on in years, who seems to have recognised Pope's genius and given him warm encouragement and friendly counsel; and, lastly, that dissolute old rake Wycherley, who could well have introduced him to the worst side of town-life had Pope's disposition and health permitted it. The feebleness of Pope's body, however, debarred him from almost all the favourite pursuits of youth. His life has been described as "one long disease." His body had to be stiffened with a corset. He was dressed and undressed by an attendant, and his sickness taught him "all the unpleasing and unsocial qualities of a valetudinary man." The one pursuit that was open to him, that of study, he eagerly followed. He says of himself that from fourteen to twenty he read only for amusement, from twenty to twenty-seven for improvement and instruction; that in the first part of his time he desired only to know, and in the second he endeavoured to judge. What is certain is that he read less for ideas than to find ready-made images and to feel for the best collections of words.

Pope had now acquired all the manners of the author. At seventeen he began to frequent Will's Coffee-house and to speak disparagingly of critics. After the appearance of his *Pastorals* in 1709 side by side with the *Pastorals* of Ambrose Philips, his future enemy, Pope wrote his *Essay on Criticism,* a compendium of Horace and Locke, and a codification of the latest French rules, which was published anonymously in May, 1711. This attracted the notice of Addison, who praised it in *The Spectator,* and gained for Pope an introduction to Addison's literary cir-

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cle. In 1712 Pope's *Rape of the Lock*[1] appeared in *Lintot's Miscellany,* and in the same year he wrote *The Messiah,* a pastoral modelled on Virgil's fifth eclogue, for *The Spectator.* His *Windsor Forest* (1713) won him the friendship of Swift, and Pope was beguiled into leaving Addison's "little senate" and joining Swift's "Scriblerus Club," which included Gay, Arbuthnot, Atterbury, Oxford, and others. *The Temple of Fame,* a liberal paraphrase of Chaucer's *House of Fame,* followed in 1715. Pope now undertook the stupendous task of translating Homer. The work was begun at the instigation of Sir William Trumbull. Pope invited subscriptions for it and was warmly encouraged by Swift, perhaps the most faithful of his friends. *The Iliad* appeared at length in six volumes (1715-20). He afterwards supplemented this by a translation, with the aid of Broome and Fenton, of *The Odyssey* (1725-6). Both ventures were in every way successful. Pope made about £9,000 by them and laid the foundations of that competence which he enjoyed with sense and moderation. The work also excited great admiration. It was, however, the cause of a breach between Pope and Addison.[2]

[1] If Pope is profoundest in his *Satires* and most happily sententious in his *Essay on Man,* he is more purely a poet in *The Rape of the Lock* than in any other of his productions. Elsewhere he has shown more force, more wit, more reach of thought, but nowhere such a truly artistic combination of elegance and fancy. It ranks by itself, indeed, as one of the purest works of human fancy and one of the most harmonious. The fancy, it is true, is that of the wit rather than that of the poet, and Pope's fancy was so exceedingly circumscribed that it seldom extends beyond the epigram or the couplet upon which he is immediately at work.

[2] It also led to Pope's animosity against Bentley, who had remarked in the presence of Mead and Atterbury, "A pretty poem, Mr. Pope; but you must not call it Homer." "I talked against his Homer," said Bentley, "and the portentous cub

The first volume of Pope's *Homer* appeared in 1715 and in the same year Addison's friend Tickell published his version of the first book of *The Iliad.* Pope affected to believe that this was done at Addison's instigation, and years afterward vented his spleen in a clever satire (published in 1735), *The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,* in which Addison appears under the character of Atticus. The quarrel was rather a one-sided affair: Addison did not allow himself to be disturbed by these attacks, and was never actively hostile to Pope. Pope's irritable temperament had made for him other enemies, real or fancied, and it was with the idea of wiping off old scores with these that the *Dunciad* was written. The first three books appeared anonymously in May, 1728, and created a mighty stir among the authors of the period. An enlarged edition was issued in 1729, but the work was not acknowledged until 1735.

Pope was now living at Twickenham. In 1716 his family had removed from Binfield to Chiswick, and on the death of his father, in the next year, Pope purchased a small leasehold estate of five acres at Twickenham. Here he lived in easy circumstances, with numerous friends, a mother to whom he was tenderly attached, and a garden to occupy his leisure. The social circle was a large one. Bolingbroke, who had come to live at Dawley, was a close neighbour of Pope's, and Pope frequently drove over to visit him. He also kept up his correspondence with Swift, and made arrangements for the publication of *Gulliver's Travels.* With Atterbury and Congreve he was on familiar terms. He stayed at the country houses of Lord Harcourt, Lord Bathurst, and Lord Digby, and turned most

never forgives." His failure as Shakespeare-editor exacerbated him against all verbal critics. Of Patrick, the dictionary-maker, he said he could allow him to know the meaning of a single word, but not of two words put together.

of those establishments upside down by the taxes he laid upon the endurance of the servants. He demanded coffee at all hours of the night, and in spite of the liberal vails he gave, Harley's servants were in open revolt against the "little nightingale."

Both as regards social position and pecuniary profit Pope had now achieved a unique position in English literature. Those men of letters who had failed to secure equal favours from the public were naturally disinclined to ascribe his success entirely to his own superior merit. Pope's own self-love and ambition, on the other hand, had been enormously increased by success, and his temper, always impatient of opposition, had become irritably sensitive to all criticism which was calculated to make his countrymen's judgment of his merits less favourable than his own. As Pope had capped Dryden's translation of Virgil by his translation of Homer, so now he conceived the idea of immortalising the folly of his critics by laureating them as dunces in the same way in which Dryden had distinguished Settle and Shadwell. In his translations Pope had laboured confessedly for a big pecuniary reward; there can be little doubt that he put the whole of his little soul into the elaborate lampoon which he called the *Dunciad*. There is a great waste of strength in this sublimated squib, and most of the petty writers whose names it enshrines like flies in amber are now wholly unknown.

> Pretty! in amber to observe the forms
> Of hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms!
> The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,
> But wonder how the devil they got there.

But although in order to appreciate its allusions we have to read the *Dunciad* with notes, it is easy to see what execution it must have done at the time, and it is impossible to withhold one's admiration from the wit, the

wickedness, the triumphant mischief of the thing. All the time he was carrying on this unholy warfare Pope was carefully preparing a supreme demonstration of moral as opposed to mere literary pre-eminence. Pope's *Essay on Man* was first planned in 1725. The moral epistles to Burlington and Bathurst, on false taste and on riches respectively, were based upon principles similar to those which he was preparing to systematise in his larger essay upon the moral government of the world. The *Essay on Man* was finally published after the usual concealed precautions and manœuvres in 1733-4; the first epistle appearing in February, 1733, the fourth and last in January, 1734. The *Essay on Man* occupies a position among Pope's works analogous to that of the *Essay on Criticism*. As the latter was the product of general forces operating throughout Europe in the general sphere of taste and imagination, so the *Essay on Man* reflects the influences which since the Reformation had determined in England the direction of religious thought. The most advanced school of theory at the time was the deistical, and the ideas of this school were filtered down for Pope, himself no thinker, through the medium of Bolingbroke; Bolingbroke himself was in all but name an optimist. He rejected revelation, ridiculed the Old Testament, and refused to believe in a future state, but he was convinced, "in opposition to atheists and divines," that the general state of mankind under the present scheme of providence was a state not only tolerable but happy.

Yet the theory that Pope merely versified what Bolingbroke set down in prose can, as Dr. Johnson says, hardly be true. The *Essay* plainly appears the fabric of a poet: what Bolingbroke supplied could be only the first principles; the order, illustrations, and embellishments must all be Pope's, and these, it must be added, are just the things which constitute the merit of the poem. The phi-

losophy of the poem is poor and incongruous. It is the harmony of the rhetoric, the terseness of the expression, and the brilliance of the epigrams that make the poem one of the most fondly cherished and the most frequently cited in the English language.[1]

It was Pope's design, he tells us, to

> Eye Nature's walks, shoot Folly as it flies,
> And catch the Manners living as they rise;
> Laugh where we must, be candid where we can;
> But vindicate the ways of God to man.

The general drift of our philosophaster is clearly conveyed at the close of the first epistle:

> All are but parts of one stupendous whole
> Whose body Nature is, and God the soul;
> That chang'd thro' all, and yet in all the same;
> Great in the earth as in th' ethereal frame;
> Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
> Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees.
>
> From Nature's chain whatever link you strike,
> Tenth or ten thousandth, break the chain alike.
>
> All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
> All Chance, direction which thou canst not see;
> All Discord, Harmony not understood;
> All partial Evil, universal Good:
> And spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite,
> One truth is clear, WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT."

[1] A Swiss professor, named Jean Pierre de Crousaz (1653—1750), a Christian apologist of some ability, attacked the fatalism and exposed some of the sophistries of Pope's system in his *Examen de l'Essai de M. Pope* (Lausanne, 1737). Pope was seriously alarmed by the attack, but was fortunate in obtaining the services of a redoubtable bravo of controversy in the person of William Warburton. Pope was most effusive in his thanks for this support, and assured his champion that he understood the Popean philosophy better than Pope himself.

It is true that the reader may not derive either much pleasure or much comfort from these unmitigated platitudes. But it is far otherwise as regards the exquisite beauty and refinement of Pope's poetical ornaments and figures. Who, for instance, is not charmed with such illustrations as that of the poor Indian

> Who thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
> His faithful dog shall bear him company;

or again with the lines—

> Learn of the little Nautilus to sail,
> Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale;

and—

> The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine!
> Feels at each thread, and lives along the line?

Who again has not been delighted with the phrasing in

> Die of a rose in aromatic pain;

or again—

> From grave to gay, from lively to severe?

The most original, and in many ways perhaps the ripest, of all Pope's maturer writings was the series of satires entitled *Imitations from Horace,* the origin of which is ascribed to a suggestion made in the winter of 1732, during the progress of the famous *Essay on Man.*

"When I had a fever one winter in town," Pope said to his friend Spence, "that confined me to my room for some days, Lord Bolingbroke came to see me, happened to take up a Horace that lay on the table, and in turning it over dipt on the first satire of the second book. He observed how well that would hit my case if I were to imitate it in English. After he was gone I read it over,

translated it in a morning or two, and sent it to press in a week or fortnight after. And this was the occasion of my imitating some other satires and epistles afterwards."

There are six of these wonderful satires, with an epilogue and a prologue, ranging in date from 1733 to 1738. The prologue, in the form of an *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,* was written in 1734-5, and is perhaps Pope's masterpiece, for it shows his command of language and metre at their very highest development, and it contains the subtlest of all his depreciations, that of his old friend Addison, stippled in from the depths of his unforgiving nature with an infinitude of artful, laborious, yet most venomous scratches.

Pope's moral nature had been warped by success and flattery. Yet his thoughts were henceforth directed to one constant object, that of exhibiting a fine and generous moral character. He proposed to achieve this in perpetuity by securing the publication of his select correspondence, while at the same time he made it appear that his letters were published against his wish and in spite of his opposition. He arranged accordingly for a sham surreptitious edition of a portion of his correspondence, upon the appearance of which he took advantage publicly to advertise that he was now under the painful necessity of printing a genuine edition. He carefully pointed out in the preface how he had unconsciously drawn his own portrait in letters written without the least thought that the world would ever be a witness to them; while, as a matter of fact, he not only studiously revised the letters, but materially altered them with a view of setting forth his own virtues to greater advantage. By an even more discreditable manœuvre he tried to cajole Swift into taking upon himself the onus of publishing their mutual correspondence, though he had eventually to arrange for the publication of the letters in London in 1741 under cover

of a lying statement to the effect that they were merely a reprint of an unauthorised Dublin edition.

In 1742 he published the fourth, and in many respects the most finished, book of his *Dunciad,* taking advantage of a recent quarrel to enshrine Colley Cibber as hero in place of Theobald. There were no signs as yet of waning power, but Pope in reality was ageing rapidly. During the next two years he was constantly occupied in the final revision of his works. Bolingbroke saw him often after 1743, and Spence watched him as Xenophon watched Socrates. The illness which proved fatal to the poet was asthmatical dropsy.[1] Physicians and quacks were alike summoned to his bedside, and some of the latter eagerly detected signs of improvement. "Here I am," said Pope, "dying from a hundred good symptoms."

[1] Friends rather precipitately attributed his end to gluttony. He was frequently sick at meals. "The death of great men," says Johnson, "is not always proportioned to the lustre of their lives. Hannibal (says Juvenal) did not perish by a javelin or a sword; the slaughters of Camæ were revenged by a ring. The death of Pope was imputed to a silver saucepan in which it was his delight to heat potted lampreys."

The first edition of Pope was that by Bishop Warburton, who was responsible among other things for the arrangement of the satires and the titles given to them. In the following year, 1752, came Joseph Warton's famous *Essay on Pope,* continued in 1782. Owen Ruffhead's *Life* appeared in 1769, Johnson's in 1781, and that by Robert Carruthers in 1857. All these are superseded by the *Life* by W. J. Courthope, 1889. This last is incorporated with the standard edition of the *Works* of Pope in 10 vols., 1871-1889, in which the labours of Croker, Dilke, Elwin, and Courthope are alike embodied. This is known as "Elwin and Courthope." * An excellent one-volume edition is the Globe, edited by Dr. A. W. Ward, originally in 1869. There is an interesting edition of the *Essay on Man* by Mark Pattison, 1870. The Essays by Lowell, Leslie Stephen, and Churton Collins on Pope are to be consulted. Lord Jeffreys' Essay on Pope is characteristic; Beljame has much on Pope's

At the earnest request of Hooke, the historian, a fervent Catholic, on May 29th, 1744, he sent for a priest and received absolution. On the evening of the next day he died, and six days later was buried in Twickenham Church. When Pope died in 1744, he was at the height of his renown, the acknowledged monarch of letters; as supreme as Voltaire was when the excitement of his triumphal return to Paris hastened his end a generation later. Voltaire himself, in 1726, had called Pope the best poet living, and by 1744, Pope's style was paramount throughout the cultivated world; it was the apotheosis of wit, point, lucidity, and technical skill. Pope was a small man in many ways. But he was, we must remember, a great sufferer. And, if the achievement be any index of the soul, he was far from little. He was, indeed, in a far truer sense than Donne, whose satires he imitated,

position as a man of letters and as a pioneer literary wage-earner. *The Rape of the Lock* has been well edited by Ryland and Eaton, and "embroidered" pictorially by Aubrey Beardsley.

"Pope himself had no lyric gift, but the complete disappearance during the first half of the eighteenth century of the poetical freedom and impulse which had inspired so much English verse up to the time of *Alexander's Feast* suggests that general causes were at work beyond the operation of individual genius. And the simplest explanation of the phenomenon seems to me to be that the circumstances which had brought about the revolution of 1688 had for the time being caused the temporary suppression of certain mediæval elements in the national life, which did not rise again into vigour till they found renewed poetical expression in the lyrics of Gray and Collins" (Courthope). It is noteworthy that Pope is praised by Johnson for not varying the couplet. Cowper, on the other hand, sees matter for blame in Pope's mechanic art and balanced line. It was natural enough that when the Queen Anne poetry took a serious turn, the generalising spirit of the age should conduct it preferentially into the paths of ethical and didactic verse.

the ruler "as he thought fit" of the "universal monarchy of wit." The prominence which he came to give to Ethics in his scheme of values is characteristic of our race. Few poets have left more permanent traces on the language. After Shakespeare and Milton he is commonly recognised as the third of our great poets. He succeeded in bringing poetry, to which we cannot rationally refuse the epithet great, nearer to the ordinary level of prose than any other English writer. In his own century he obtained a completer recognition than either Shakespeare or Milton had done. He was feared, perhaps, more than any man of his time, and was flattered by imitation to an extent which almost proved fatal to the whole school of poetry which he represents.

CHAPTER VIII

SWIFT

"He describes his fictitious persons as if for the police."
—EMERSON.

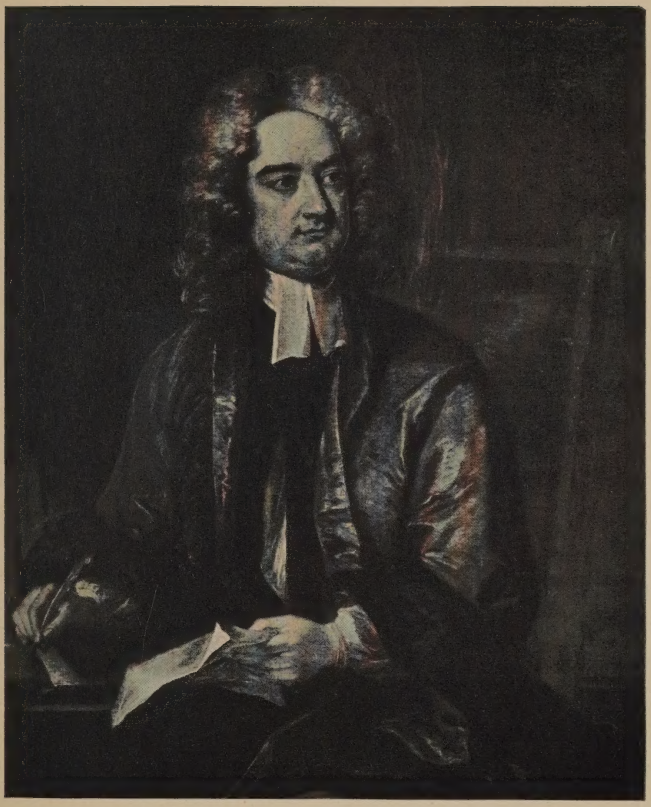
"The soul of Rabelais dwelling in a dry place."—COLERIDGE.

With Temple at Moor Park—*The Battle of the Books*—*A Tale of a Tub*—Stella and Vanessa—The Scriblerus Club—*Gulliver's Travels*—Literary characteristics—Arbuthnot.

JONATHAN SWIFT, born in Hoey's Court, Dublin, on November 30th, 1667 (a few months after the death of his father), was taken over to England as an infant and nursed at Whitehaven, whence he returned to Ireland in his fourth year. His grandfather, Thomas Swift, vicar of Goodrich, near Ross, appears to have been a doughty member of the Church militant, who lost his possessions by taking the losing side in the Civil War, and died in 1658, before the Restoration could bring him redress. He married Elizabeth, niece of Sir Erasmus Dryden, the poet's grandfather. Hence the familiarity of the poet's well-known "cooling-card" to the budding genius of his kinsman Jonathan: "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet." Swift was educated mainly at the charges of his uncle Godwin. At six he went to Kilkenny Grammar School, where Congreve was a schoolfellow; at fourteen he entered, as a pensioner, Trinity College, Dublin, where he seems to have neglected his opportunities.[1] The patronage of his uncle galled him; he was dull and unhappy. We can find in Swift no signs of precocious genius. In 1688 the rich uncle, whose supposed riches

[1] See, however, *Notes and Queries*, 6th series, v. 383.

had dwindled so much that at his death he was almost insolvent, died, and Swift sought counsel of his mother at Leicester. As a direct result of this domestic conference, Swift, towards the close of 1689, entered upon an engagement as secretary to Sir William Temple, whose wife was related to Mrs. Swift. It was at Moor Park, near Farnham, the residence to which Sir William Temple had retired late in life, that Swift's acquaintance with Esther Johnson, the "Stella" of the *Journal to Stella*, began. Mrs. Johnson, Esther's mother, the widow of a merchant of good family, was living at Moor Park as companion to Lady Giffard, Temple's sister. Swift was twenty-two and Esther eight years old at the time, and a curious friendship sprang up between them. He taught the little girl how to write, and gave her advice in her reading. On his arrival at Moor Park Swift was, in his own words, "a raw, inexperienced youth," and his duties were originally purely those of an amanuensis. His abilities finally won him the confidence of his employer, and he was entrusted with important missions. He was introduced to William III. while on a visit to Sir William Temple, and on one occasion accompanied the King in his walks round the grounds. In 1693 Temple sent him to William III. to convince that monarch of the necessity for triennial parliaments. The next year, however, the young man quitted Temple, who had, he considered, delayed too long in obtaining him preferment. He was ordained, and obtained the small prebend of Kilroot, near Belfast, where he carried on a flirtation with a Miss Waring, whom he called Varina. In May, 1696, he grew tired of Irish life, and was glad to accept Temple's proposals for his return to Moor Park, where he continued until Temple's death in 1699. He was employed in preparing Temple's memoirs and correspondence for publication, and in 1697, he wrote *The Battle of the Books,*



JONATHAN SWIFT

supporting the side taken by his patron in the Letters of Phalaris controversy, in which his amazing gift of allegorical irony is first exhibited to the world. On Temple's death in January, 1699, he returned to Ireland with a legacy of £100 and the task of publishing his former employer's posthumous works. He was offered and accepted the post of chaplain to Lord Berkeley, and early in 1700 he obtained the livings of Laracor, Agher, and Rathbeggan, with the prebend of Dunlavin in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. Miss Waring seems to have thought that these preferments afforded an excellent opportunity for matrimony; but Swift was of a different opinion, and his connection with "Varina" was broken forever. In 1701 he took his Doctor's degree at Dublin, and in the same year published anonymously a political pamphlet, *A Discourse on the Contests and Dissentions in Athens and Rome.* This pamphlet is a characteristic reflection upon the bigotry and bloodthirstiness of the paltry factions of the time, and was sufficiently trenchant to be attributed to Somers, and again to Burnet. The Whig magnates began to regard Temple's late secretary as a desirable recruit for their publicity department. After five months in London Swift returned to Ireland in September, 1701, accompanied by Esther Johnson and her friend Mrs. Dingley. Swift had pointed out to them that they could live more cheaply in Ireland than elsewhere, and henceforth the two ladies lived in Swift's houses at Dublin and Laracor during his absence, and when he was in Ireland took lodgings in his neighbourhood.

There is reason to believe that Swift's first great satire, *A Tale of a Tub,* was drafted at Kilroot in 1695, and wellnigh completed at Moor Park about a year later. It was first published anonymously in May, 1704, but its real authorship was soon guessed at by the wits, amongst whom Swift's position was henceforth assured. In the tale, to the

alarm of most of those of his contemporaries who could understand him, Swift discussed the growing pretensions of science, the impotence of human reason, the immeasurable follies of mankind with an almost apathetic disregard for the decencies or conventionalities of his age and country. Irreverent as it was, the satire was an unmistakable defence of the Church of England, against the opponents of which, whether Papists, Nonconformists, or Free-thinkers, the author poured forth an inextinguishable torrent of hatred and abuse. When the Whig party collapsed in 1710, Swift was amused, if not delighted, to witness the snub administered to the friends of dissent. All that prevented him from throwing himself into the arms of the Tories was their alleged Jacobitism and supposed tolerance of Catholics. But his fears were soon allayed, and in the autumn of 1710, upon discovering that Harley was prepared to treat him as an intimate friend, Swift could not contain his jubilation; and from making ugly faces he soon got to throwing the stickiest mud he could find at "those ungrateful dogs," his late Whig friends. His more important contributions to the Tory propaganda of the period were his papers in *The Examiner* written in the winter and spring of 1710-11, and his notable pamphlet upon *The Conduct of the Allies.* In the plainness and patent honesty of this appeal to common sense even Daniel Defoe was excelled. Issued on November 27th, 1711, *The Conduct of the Allies* was greedily bought, and more than anything else made the Peace of Utrecht acceptable to the nation. Swift lived modestly, during this period, in lodgings, first in Bury Street, St. James's, and afterwards at Chelsea; but his position in politics and social life between 1710 and 1714 was perhaps the most imposing ever maintained by an English man of letters. He was in the real or pretended confidence of all the leaders of the day—and was himself, indeed, one of the most in-

fluential, though when he turned the talk to preferment he found the *Tale of a Tub* a veritable millstone round his neck.

The proud resentment with which Swift repudiated a pecuniary *douceur* from the ministers, and the payment in submission to his whims and caprices which he exacted instead, was all his own. He despised the rewards of ministers utterly: he knew how they were obtained. The fierce ambition which made him so anxious to secure a bishopric or other suitable provision was due in large measure to his anxiety to provide in a handsome manner, matrimonial or otherwise, for the one woman whom he really loved, the absent Stella, to whom in a series of letters from September, 1710, to June, 1713 (the unique *Journal to Stella*), he communicated almost every fact and every feeling of this teeming and triumphant period in his chequered career. Apart from the abnormal disgust which the human animal seemed to excite in Swift, the consciousness of ill-health and the terror of poverty by which he was afflicted render it improbable that he ever contemplated more than a nominal union with Stella. If the formal ceremony of marriage between them ever did take place (a very much disputed point) it was certainly not until Swift had attained his fiftieth year, and marked the close rather than the commencement of an epoch of mutual confidence and unclouded affection. If the marriage took place at all (which is unlikely), it can only be regarded as a concession to the jealousy which Stella had conceived of a rival in Swift's affections. On October 20th, 1710, Swift first mentions in his journal-letter to Stella the name of Mrs. Vanhomrigh as that of his hostess. Esther Vanhomrigh ("Vanessa"), the daughter, became Swift's devoted slave. Swift flattered this clever and impressionable girl by playing at being her tutor. She startled him after a time by confessing that

love had taken the place of admiration in her heart. Swift tried to convince her of the impropriety of a romantic passion and to indicate a more rational kind of intimacy in his remarkable poem of *Cadenus and Vanessa,* begun in 1712 and finished in 1713. Poor Hessy's infatuation was not amenable to such treatment. She followed Swift to Ireland, and he was reduced to expedients for temporising with her and mollifying Stella. In 1723 Vanessa is said to have written to Stella or to Swift (there are discrepancies between the versions of Sheridan and Lord Orrery, neither of whom is distinguished by minute accuracy), asking whether the report that they were married was true. Swift rode down to Vanessa's retreat at Colbridge, threw down her letter in a great rage, and left without speaking a word. Vanessa died shortly afterwards, having revoked a will in Swift's favour. Swift hid himself for two months in the South of Ireland. Stella also was shocked, but when some one remarked that the deceased must have been a remarkable woman to inspire such a poem as *Cademus and Vanessa,* observed that there was nothing surprising about it, for the Dean, as all the world knew, could write finely upon a broomstick.

Swift had played with and been injured by fire; he had impaired his recuperative force just at the period he was to be most in need of it. In June, 1713, after many disappointments, he obtained the deanery of St. Patrick's, Dublin, and returned to Ireland. He was summoned back to England by his political friends in September. The short exile, during which he had been horribly melancholy, was his Elba, and it was followed in August, 1714, after the Tory *débâcle,* by his St. Helena, or permanent exile at Dublin, where for thirty years he was dying daily of the inanition of inferior company. Like Napoleon, he sought relief in petty quarrels with the local authorities—in this case the Archbishop and the choir.

It was practically his only amusement. The melancholy which now oppressed him was far more horrible than anything of the kind he had encountered before. The self-suppression of his early manhood, the hopeless confusion of his love affairs, the defective chemistry of his body, his recent experience as a place-broker of the very basest aspect of humanity, his political disappointment, and the shock of severance from friends who had been at the very helm of the world's affairs: these things combined to produce in Swift the settled gloom of a profound misanthropy. It was under these cruelly adverse circumstances that Swift's slowly maturing intellectual powers attained their zenith, about 1724, after ten years of exile, in the course of which he had entirely shed the Swift of 1714. In the course of this time a keen but not altogether unkindly contempt had developed into a positive loathing for all mankind. With friends and foes alike, henceforth, his insight into human weakness was absolutely terrible, and every seemingly playful scratch had a malignant poison in it.

During the last months of Queen Anne, Swift joined his London friends Arbuthnot, Pope, Parnell, Gay, and Harley (Lord Oxford), in establishing the Scriblerus Club, the members of which agreed to write in ridicule of sham learning and false taste. In 1714 the Club was broken up. Swift sought refuge in Ireland, Oxford was impeached, Bolingbroke fled to St. Germain. From the *Scriblerus Memoirs* then projected (though not published until 1741) Swift got the first hints for *Gulliver,* and Pope for his *Dunciad.* We first hear of *Gulliver's Travels* about Christmas, 1721, when Bolingbroke wrote to Swift, "I long to see your *Travels.*" In 1724 Swift was preoccupied over his *Drapier's Letters.* In 1725 he was amending and transcribing the *Travels.* They were inspired, he wrote to Pope, by his hatred and detestation

for that animal called man. Not the individual so much, but the whole species. "Oh, if the world had but a dozen Arbuthnots in it, I would burn my *Travels!*" In 1726 the old Club reassembled in London "like mariners after a storm." Swift began looking out for a printer who would risk his ears and print *Gulliver,* but the serious illness of Esther Johnson (Stella) necessitated his temporary return to Dublin, and it was not until the end of October, 1726, that *Travels into several remote Nations of the World. In 4 parts. By Lemuel Gulliver, first a Surgeon, and then a Captain of several Ships,* was published, anonymously, by the bookseller Benjamin Motte. Its success was rapid and complete. Arbuthnot wrote to the author that it would have as great a run as Bunyan. Swift's genius is certainly well represented by *Gulliver;* for although it illustrates no single one of his manifold talents in its most intense form, its merit is that, more than any other single piece, it unites all his excellences.

The book was pirated at Dublin in 1727, and translated into French in the July of the same year by the Abbé Desfontaines. It was read with the utmost avidity, though a bishop of his acquaintance told Swift that it was full of improbable lies, and that for his part he hardly believed a word of it. If Swift's end had really been to vex the world, rather than divert it, the book was a signal failure. He made either £200 or £300 out of it—the only money he ever earned by his writings.[1] After his success, Swift's sojourn in London during the season of 1727 must have

[1] It was badly mangled in the press, he complained (especially Bk. II., chaps v. and vi.); like *Crusoe,* it was reprinted in a serial—*Parker's Penny Post.* The painful attempts that have been made to discover Gulliver's ancestry only serve to throw the author's originality into relief. Swift had naturally read Lucian, Rabelias, and possibly also *The Arabian Nights.* He had read as a young man the lunary adventures of Bishop Wilkins, Bishop Godwin, and Cyrano de Bergerac. He had read contemporary accounts of *Peter the Wild Boy, the History*

been a fairly pleasant one. He returned to Dublin just in time to watch over the death-bed of Stella, who expired after a lingering illness in January, 1728. Swift was then in his sixty-second year. The story of the remaining seventeen years of his life he had already epitomised with a terrible and remorseless insight in the passages which he had devoted to the human animal in a state of senility. Of all such matters, round which mankind is so solicitous to wrap the rags of respectibility, Swift loves to expose the dark secrets. He was made for a bustling, multiple life and an enormous expenditure of nervous energy. A tranquil existence led in his case to the secretion and dangerous accumulation of a morbid and malignant irritability.

How his irritability and eccentricities and avarice grew upon him, so that his friends and servants had a hard task in humouring him, we learn from the traditions of others; how his memory began to fail, and other signs of breaking up began to appear, we learn from himself. The fire of his genius was not, however, yet burnt out. Between 1729 and 1736 he continued to throw out satires and lampoons in profusion, referring to the men and topics of the day, and particularly to the political affairs of Ireland; and it was during this time that his *Directions to Servants,* his *Polite Conservation* and other well-known *facetiæ* first saw the light. The mental decay which he had always feared ("I shall be like that tree," he once said: "I shall begin dying at the top") became marked in 1740. Paralysis was followed by aphasia. Legal guardians were appointed in August, 1742. Amidst the solitude and gloom of helpless isolation, a period of great physical agony was followed by an apparently complete

of Sevarambes, by D'Alais (1677), and Foligny's *Journey of Jacques Sadeur to Australia* (1693). He may have read Joshua Barnes's description of a race of "Pygmies" in his *Gerania* of 1675.

apathy. After three years of living death he was finally released on October 19th, 1745, six weeks short of seventy-eight. Four days later he was buried at midnight by Stella's side in St. Patrick's Cathedral.

In the great structure of more or less refined conventionality which has been so assiduously built up in England from Addison's time, Swift has no part or lot. He would never abjure his right to call a spade a spade. No writer ever wrote whose meaning is more absolutely unmistakable; and this is the more remarkable inasmuch as Swift revelled in irony, banter, persiflage, personal satire, parody, and all the most ticklish forms of literary art. But he, first of all our writers, recognised lucid exposition as the sovereign quality of prose. He realised his meaning in the clearest and most positive manner, and then expressed it in the plainest and most direct. Force and clearness can no farther go than in Swift's prose from 1708 to 1728. Pat words or phrases never diverted his thought. Words were the slaves who hastened to execute his slightest whim. There was nothing he thought that he could not express, and express in such a way that it would never have to be said again; for Swift habitually made his ideas as clear to the humblest capacity as they are capable of being made to any one. The words of the common man arrange themselves, as it were subconsciously, in the mind of the greatest of satirists and wits. Some of his profoundest effects of irony are obtained through verisimilitude. He represents the under or shady side of human activity with such minuteness as to make its infinite pettiness clear to the meanest observer. The things he hated most in literature were cant, false sentiment, smug decency and triteness, all of which he assailed in a series of the most ludicrous images and the most crushing burlesques. Swift employed these arts in a manner which is the exact reverse of that employed by the majority of practitioners. With him

there is no fumbling, no mouthing, no smiling or twitching of the lips. He says everything with the gravity of a divine and the stolidity of a carter. Yet no other immortal has ever made his fellow-men so conscious of their mortality, their purposeless bustle, their puny rage, their colossal insignificance. No single writer—not even Voltaire—has ever proved himself so formidable as Swift, whether he was attacking an individual, a party, a powerful ministry, a great country, or the whole of mankind. His most comprehensive scorn, that for mankind, may be classified under three heads: the Olympian, the whimsical, and the brutal. And of the two former kinds we find examples everywhere in *Gulliver,* a book to which, as an example of purity and nervosity in English prose style, we can point to no equal.

Dryden had foretold his cousin Swift that he would never be a poet; but for those who believe in gradations of poetic power, the prediction is merely what the Houyhnhnms would call the thing that was not, for Swift wrote a quantity of verse of a high order. It was true that full-sail verse was beyond his skill, but the simple fore-and-aft rig of Butler's octosyllabics he could manage effectively enough, as may be seen in his verses of 1731 on the death of Dr. Swift, the technique of which is hardly inferior to the wit and insight which render it one of the miracles of occasional verse. There is not only, as Hazlitt remarks, a dry humour, an exquisite tone of irony in these productions, but there is also a touching, unpretending pathos mixed up with the most whimsical and eccentric of his satirical strokes. In his verse, as in his prose, he studiously avoids ornament, metaphor, poetic diction, antithesis, erudition, and the Pindaric manner. Plain words in their proper order is his secret.[1]

A great friend of Swift, Gay, and Pope, and with them

[1] The great editions of Swift are those of Hawkesworth and Scott (1814 and 1824, 19 vols. with Life). But there is an

the most prominent member of the Scriblerus Club, was Dr. John Arbuthnot (1667—1735), a keen Tory and son of an episcopal minister in Kincardineshire. Arbuthnot owes his fame rather, perhaps, to what he did not write, than to what he did. He was a man of great intellectual power, and great kindliness of soul, who was incapable of being a serious rival to any of his contemporaries owing to his complete lack of literary ambition. Dr. Johnson recognised in him a kindred spirit, but with the sagacity of the Great Cham he combined the humour and fine literary instinct of Goldsmith. Chesterfield had a profound regard for him, and Swift once said that if there were more Arbuthnots about he would burn his *Travels.* His *Memoirs of the Life and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus,* published by Pope in 1741, form an extraordinary *olla podrida* of strange burlesque learning, from which Swift, Sterne, Scott, and others seem to have pulled a few plums. *The Art of Political Lying* and his famous political satire, *The History of John Bull* (1712), must have been inspired directly by Swift. As an allegory of statecraft this remains without a rival, and may be termed the great-grandfather of the political satires and cartoons of fifty years later. It served as the most piquant sauce that could have been devised to go with Swift's standing dish of *The Conduct of the Allies* to turn the popular humour against the Whigs. Arbuthnot died after much suffering, on February 27th, 1735. He was buried five days later in St. James's, Piccadilly.

admirable edition of the Prose Works recently added to Bohn's Standard Library. There are Lives by Dean Swift, Orrery, Delany, Sheridan, Johnson, Forster (unfinished), Leslie Stephen, Moriarty, Churton Collins, and Sir Henry Craik.*

CHAPTER IX

THE RISE OF THE ESSAY: ADDISON AND STEELE

"To estimate Addison at his real value we must regard him as the Chief Architect of Public Opinion in the eighteenth century."—W. J. COURTHOPE.

"Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."—DR. JOHNSON.

Post-Restoration London—Addison—The Kit-cat Club—Steele's plays—*The Tatler*—*the Spectator*.

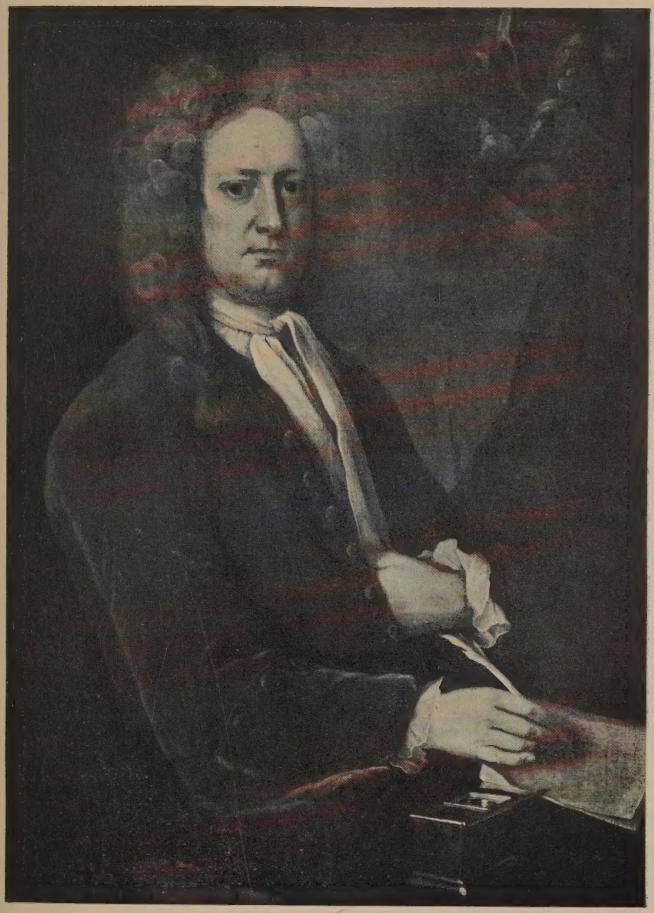
THE chapter which may seem the least exciting is perhaps the most important in connection with the "Augustan" period in our literature which we have now reached. It is the chapter which concerns the birth and the development of the English essay. So outworn has this species of composition gradually become, and so indistinguishable from the ordinary "article" of journalistic commerce, that it needs a somewhat vigorous effort of the imagination to conceive the essay as it was in Addison's day—the most potent and the most popular factor in the rapid transformation of English society which took place between the death of Queen Mary II. in 1694 and that of her sister, Queen Anne, in 1714. Yet as regards the conduct and demeanour of our countrymen it may well be doubted whether any secular literary product has ever had such a conspicuous and immediate effect as the files of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.[1]

[1] In the social history of England the reign of Charles II. forms an epoch of the very first importance. In this reign,

Instruction in the rudiments of cultured demeanour was what Augustan society wanted. The imperative need of a large and thoroughly urbanised population was urbanity. As in politics the desideratum had been a means of getting rid of a minister without impeaching him and sending him to the Tower, so in manners some means of reconciling fashion and virtue, industry and civil demeanour, without pulpit-threats of damnation was the talisman demanded. The town needed an introduction to the country (of which the Queen Anne "cit" knew practically nothing), the godly citizen to the man about town, the town-bred damsel to the Kit-cat toast, the Liberal merchant to the Conservative squire. Taught by a wide knowledge and varied experience of the world, by instinctive

as a result of the tendencies of over a century, a term is formally put to the tyranny alike of the Crown, the theologians, and the territorial classes (the conjurors and chieftains of an earlier social state). The clergy definitely lost their power of taxing themselves and of burning their adversaries, or of destroying them almost as effectually by tendering them the *ex officio* oath. The territorial classes definitely lost their feudal rights and their original jurisdiction (through the House of Lords) in civil suits. By the Habeas Corpus Act, and by the Statute of Frauds, and the abolition of Purveyance and Pre-emption, the liberty of the subject and the security of his property were made as certain as our law could make it. And the coping stone was placed upon the modern structure of equal rights by the liberty of the Press, the independence of the judical bench, and the concession of the principles of toleration, all of which followed immediately upon the ejection of the Stuarts in 1688.

The period of the Dutch War was followed by an unexampled growth of material prosperity, and this was fostered by the development of the funding system, the growth of a financial class (in succession to the old goldsmiths), and the institution of the Bank of England. With these innovations the Whigs, who formed the aggressive as well as the progressive party and were in favour of the exten-



FROM THE PAINTING BY DAHL

JOSEPH ADDISON

good taste, generosity of feeling and a strong natural humour, Steele diagnosed the malady of his time to a miracle, and proposed to remedy it not with formal doses of moral declamation, but by homœopathic quantities of good sense, good taste, and good-humoured morality, disguised beneath an easy and fashionable style. Addison then saw his way to reinforce his copious friend, with a more frugal but more refined endowment, with a more exquisite perception of literary propriety, and with a competent knowledge of what literature had already achieved towards the structure of social amenity, in the way of the essay of Montaigne, Bacon, Cowley, and Temple, in the way of comedy (dialogue and manners) by Molière, Con-

sion of English prestige by foreign war, specially identified themselves. The Tories, on the other hand, were opposed to the extension of the commercial interest and the national debt; down with the army, they cried, down with the war, down with the dissenter, and out with the foreigner. Their special anxiety was that the Church of England was in danger. Both parties were united in a common hatred of Catholics. In spite of the efforts of the territorial party and the country squires (who clung fondly to the semi-feudal ideas of Clarendon and Sir Godfrey Peverel), the obvious tendency of the time was to the urbanisation of England, to the rapid development of industry and commerce, with attendant wealth and luxury, at the expense of agriculture and rusticity, and the rapid growth of London as the depôt of the modern world. A large but still compact town, surrounded not by vast suburban tracts, but by country villages, London, with its beautifully balanced white spires and its vast new dome, its numerous pleasure-gardens, its theatres, and coffee-houses and taverns, its coaches and its squares, its clear and stately river with its ships and swarming boats, from which were obtained the most charming views of the wooded hills by which the city was surrounded—the London of those days must have been upon the whole a decidedly agreeable place to live in. The citizens then were much more than now exclusively traders, characterised by solidity of character and by untrammelled energy

greve, and Vanbrugh, and in the way of character-drawing by Butler and La Bruyère.

Joseph Addison was born at the parsonage of Milston, near Amesbury, on May 1st, 1672. His father, Lancelot Addison, an eminent and learned divine, served as chaplain at Tangier, wrote some account of Western Barbary, was made Dean of Lichfield in 1683, and might have been a bishop six years later but for his high-flying churchmanship. All his three sons were very successful in life, and his daughter Dorothy was a "sort of wit"; Swift sat next her at a dinner and "was not fond of her." Joseph, the eldest son, went to Charterhouse and Oxford, migrating from Queen's to Magdalen, where his excellence in Latin

and freedom. Individual freedom was complete. There were no police to speak of and no government espionage of any kind. Political and religious bigotry were much on the decline, and people of all sects and shades lived in tolerable harmony together. The cosmopolitan element was inconspicuous: travel, owing to its expensiveness, was rare—the average Londoner literally rarely went beyond the sound of Bow Bells. The gulf between the substantial citizen and the denizen of St. James's who frequented White's and occupied a seat in the House or a place under the Government was a wide one, and it was emphasised by the growth of a standing army which diverted the younger sons of the nobles and gentry from "the city." The great deficiency of the townsman was imagination, spirituality, refinement, cultured or indeed civilised recreation of any kind. It is true that the raw material for town amusements was growing apace during the closing years of the seventeenth century. A relaxation from the somewhat grim regimen of the mediæval burgher may be discerned already in the growing taste for tea and coffee, for gardening and gardens, for picture-collecting, for cards and for popular music. Cricket, though it was already popular, was still almost exclusively the property of village greens in the south-eastern counties. The one great diversion of the older townsmen had been the stage—when it was not under the ban either of Churchman or Puritan. But the gross licentiousness of the Restoration drama, with its eternal harping upon

verse made him first a demy and then a fellow. This fondness for Latin poetry and aptitude for imitating it was to be the making of Addison. He polished up his verses so carefully that he rose to the office of Secretary (Mr. Secretary-of-State Addison). He was, of course, a proficient in complimentary verse, and his laudation of Dryden greatly pleased the old poet, who took under his patronage Addison's version of the Fourth Georgic, and introduced the young talent to Jacob Tonson, of *Miscellany* fame, the "Muses' midwife," the "father of English publishing." Tonson introduced the young Oxford poet to Somers, Montague, and Swift; more complimentary poems followed, and in 1699 these influential friends procured a Crown pension for Addison.[1] The pension was in lieu of a benefice. Addison, for his part, was to abstain from taking orders, and was to qualify himself for political employment by travel. The spirit in

the one string of cuckoldry, had gradually revolted the soberer class who formed the majority; and the stage had wantonly played into the hands of the Noncomformist conscience, as represented by the numerous societies for the reformation of manners which sprang up literally by hundreds between 1690 and 1710—the parent society of which within fifty years of its foundation instituted over 100,000 prosecutions for profaneness and debauchery. In the meantime the chief and almost the only means of satisfying the increasing demand for intellectual diversion among the more leisured classes of the *bourgeoisie* was to be found in the newspapers and gazettes which, from the time of the liberation of the Press, rapidly increased in number and variety. The methods of distribution were so rudimentary that the coffee-houses and taverns became the chief agencies for their circulation and discussion. The appetite for news and comments grew rapidly in such an atmosphere.

[1] In the same year he published at Oxford the best of his Latin verses, such as those on the Peace of Ryswick in the second volume of the miscellany known as *Musæ Anglicanæ*.

which Addison travelled in conveyed most accurately in two verses of his letter to Lord Halifax:

> Poetic fields encompass me around,
> And still I seem to tread on *classic ground.*

In the now famous phrase which he thus coined, Addison expresses exactly what he sought and found in Italy —a landscape to fit the numerous passages and proper names of Latin history and antiquity which he carried in his head. In this spirit he collected materials for his first prose work, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy,* which was issued in 1705. With a view to more immediate requirements he set himself to master French; great must have been his disappointment when the death of William at once stopped his pension and indefinitely postponed his expectation of profitable employment. For a time his fortunes seemed at rather a low ebb. Somers and Halifax were quite out of favour; he managed to offend the "proud duke" of Somerset, who offered him a tutorship; his father died, making no provision for him. On the other hand he still retained his Magdalen fellowship, and his ability was still confided in by the Whig leaders, who were yearly making more and more a point of securing the fellowship and co-operation of literary talent. It was soon after his return to England in September, 1703, that the celebrated Kit-cat Club was founded. It was owing largely to his rising reputation as a poet among the Kit-cats that Addison owed his special commission by Godolphin to write a poem on the victory of Blenheim which should be worthy of such an occasion when the nation was in the first transports of martial enthusiasm. The result was *The Campaign*—a smooth and formal poem enough, in set couplets, but avoiding the outworn and to us ridiculous method of comparing a modern general to a biblical or Homeric hero such as Joshua or Achilles,

and containing a very fine passage in which the composure of Marlborough in directing the whirlwind of battle is compared to that of an angel—the angel who "by divine command" drove "the furious blast" which desolated England in 1703—a storm the like of which has not been recorded in this country, either before or since. The poem fulfilled its object. It strengthened the ministry, the complexion of which from Tory was rapidly becoming wholly Whig, and it secured advancement for the poet. In 1706 he was already made an undersecretary and promised the reversion of several comfortable little sinecures. His rise was greatly aided by his social qualities, his high character, nobility of sentiment, sweetness of temper, and a modesty which bordered on complete diffidence. With fools he was capable of using methods of irony, and he was known to egg on these "warm in a wrong opinion" —thus affording a nucleus of truth for Pope's unkind—

> **Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,**
> **And without sneering teach the rest to sneer.**

In 1708 he came into Parliament for Malmesbury, but of course he lost his places when the Whig rout came in 1710. Henceforth, until the production of his *Cato* in April, 1713, Addison's career is inextricably entwined with that of Richard Steele.

Steele was born in Dublin in March, 1672, his father being a well-to-do Dublin attorney, who had married in 1670 an Irish widow, Elinor Sims. He was sent to Charterhouse two years before Addison, and, like his friend, went on to Oxford, first to Christ Church, then to Merton. He enlisted in the Guards "suddenly" in 1694, without taking a degree and without giving any warning to his relatives; he was in consequence disinherited. He obtained an ensign's commission, however, in 1695, after dedicating to his colonel, Lord ("Sala-

mander") Cutts, a poem on the death of Queen Mary; as an officer, rising soon to be captain, he astonished the town by his light heart and his dissipations, in the midst of which he wrote a little book called *The Christian Hero* (1701), which breathed the loftiest sentiments of piety and virtue: its object being, as he said, to fix upon his own mind a strong impression of virtue and religion in opposition to a stronger propensity towards unwarrantable pleasures (for an amusing portrait of the "Christian Hero" in person the reader is referred to *Esmond*). At the close of the same year he brought out a successful comedy, *The Funeral,* which was followed by *The Lying Lover* and *The Tender Husband,* plays which afford evidence of the influence of Jeremy Collier's attacks on the immorality of the stage. *The Tender Husband* (1705) owed many "applauded strokes" to Addison, to whom Steele dedicated it in the most generous and affectionate of terms. About the same time he married a lady with an estate in Barbados, whose death in 1707 was followed by a prompt second marriage to Mary Scurlock, the "dear Prue" to whom he addressed his delightful letters. His solid talent and staunch partisanship procured him the usual *douceurs* from the Whig party. He was made gentleman-waiter to Prince George of Denmark and gazetteer (£300 a year minus a tax of £45), a post which at that time conferred almost a monopoly of official news. With the intention of making his exclusive information the backbone of a gossipy paper of his own, he started *The Tatler* on April 12th, 1709. It was a great day for journalism, that on which "careless" Dick Steele realised this fortunate conception.

Since they wrote *The Tender Husband* together in 1705, the intimacy of Steele and Addison had been cemented by frequent association, and the soil of both their minds had been fertilised by intercourse with the most original

genius of the age, Jonathan Swift. Among the mock-heroic pieces with which, by a happy inspiration, Swift chose to satirise the absurdities of an age so artificial as that in which he lived, one of the most successful in taking the popular humour was a paper of ironical predictions prophesying the decease of a notorious almanac-maker and astrologer, one Partridge, signed with the name of Isaac Bickerstaff. Steele, seizing on the name and character of Partridge's fictitious rival, turned him with much pleasantry into the editor of his new journal, the object of which was to "expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning vanity and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour." As the paper went on, the element of news was gradually subordinated more and more to the familiar essay, in which from the first, while admitting that his own life was at best but pardonable, Steele took a bold line (after Jeremy Collier) in combating the fashionable immorality of his day. Nothing could have suited the rare and delicate talent of Addison better than the opportunity now afforded him of contributing an occasional essay or round-about paper in advocacy of virtue and scorn of bad conventions to his friend's periodical. His first paper, a perfect model of pleasantry, upon the supposed consternation of the newsmongers at the approaching peace with France, was given in the eighteenth number of *The Tatler,* during the twenty-one months of the existence of which he contributed in all 42 essays to the 271 of Steele. In these papers Steele practically initiated all the features—character-sketches, imaginary correspondence, critical papers, downright blows at duelling, gambling, foreign opera and other exotic absurdities—which were developed to such excellent purpose in *The Tatler's* more famous successor.

At the close of 1710, as Swift observed to Stella, the

Tatlers began to run somewhat dull and dry, and the farewell number appeared on January 2nd, 1711. The first number of *The Spectator* was given to the world on March 1st following. In appearance the two papers were not dissimilar. Both were single folio leaves in double column; both consisted of a single essay, with a Latin verse epigraph, and a tail of advertisements. Each was open to the charge preferred by an injured correspondent that they were printed on "tobacco paper" in a "scurvy letter." The new paper, however, was published daily, and such was the "prodigious run" of the wit and learning of the authors, that it went on regularly without a break until December 6th, 1712 (No. 555). In No. 1 Addison sketched lightly, and with his own inimitable touch, that taciturn Looker-on or Spectator whose sheetful of thoughts was to appear every morning, Sundays excepted. Following this, in No. 2, Steele dashes off the little group of select friends—the immortal baronet, Sir Roger de Coverley; the Templar; Sir Andrew Freeport, the merchant; Captain Sentry; the elderly beau, Will Honeycomb; and the Clergyman, who were to make up the the Spectator Club. As with *The Tatler,* the credit of the initiative, and of the success of the periodical as a going concern, belongs to Steele, while the ripest and most mature workmanship comes from the fine-gentleman partner. Such are Addison's sketches of Will Wimble, of Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey and at Drury Lane, and the death of the inimitable baronet, as described in a letter by Mr. Biscuit the butler. The inestimable value of *The Spectator* as a pent-house against provincial pleasantry, sham affectation, and false wit was recognised and appreciated more cordially even than in the case of *The Tatler.* Even Swift admitted that *The Spectator* was "very pretty"; Defoe allowed that its authors were applying learning and wit to the true ends for which they were given—namely, "the establishing virtue *in* and the

shaming vice *out* of the world." In less than a fortnight *The Spectator* had become not merely an indispensable "part of the tea equipage," but a necessary item of a liberal education.

The Spectator may be regarded in brief as a developed and perfected *Tatler,* and informal though the general plan and administration of the paper may have been, its conscious aim was not inaccurately summed up by Addison when he described his ambition to bring "Philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges to dwell at club and assemblies, at the tea-tables and in coffee-houses." The circulation of *The Spectator* must have been well over 3,000, until in August, 1712, the imposition of a half-penny stamp and consequent increase in price from one penny to twopence reduced it to little more than a half of that number. We do not know precisely why it was brought to a close in December, 1712, to the keen regret of a very large body of readers; but its ashes were rekindled and the fugitive folios collected and revised in book form (2 vols. 8vo, 1712-13). Of the 555 numbers of the original series Addison wrote 274 (distinguished by one of the four capital letters at the foot, C., L., I., or O.), Steele 236 (R. and T.), and the remaining contributors, Eustace Budgell, John Hughes, and others, the balance of 45. The respective merit of the shares of Addison and Steele in the periodical has been a favourite subject for academic discussion. The fluctuating balance has been well steadied by Mr. Austin Dobson, who says: "The primary invention, the creative idea, came from Steele, the shaping power, the decorative craft, from Addison. . . . Addison's papers are faultless in their art, and in this way achieve a success which is beyond the reach of Steele's quicker and more impulsive nature." On the other hand they sometimes repel us by their restraint and absence of spontaneity and glow. What there is no doubt about is that for a space of forty years, from 1710,

the united efforts of these two men raised the essay to be the most popular and the most potent instrument of communication between the brain and the heart of a great people.

With the perfection of the prose style which was to enshrine their essays, Addison and Steele had both performed the really durable part of their work. The remainder of their lives may be told in comparatively few words. A successor was designed for *The Spectator* in *The Guardian,* to which Addison continued to contribute, but Steele's new venture soon got entangled in party politics, and *The Englishman,* which followed, was a violent partisan, from whose opinions Addison found it incumbent on him to secede. He was occupied with the completion of his correct but passionless and mechanical tragedy of *Cato* (1713), which he had commenced during his travels. This bombastic piece was acclaimed as a masterpiece both at home and in France. Its success marks the climax of Addison's good fortune. Henceforth his political composure alienated Swift on one side and Steele on the other. His unexpressed claim to be primate of English literature excited the malignity of Pope. His marriage to the Dowager Countess of Warwick in 1716 procured him a secretaryship, but not much domestic happiness, and his secretaryship proved irksome. He had "too beautiful an imagination to make a man of business"; he was no speaker, his solitary attempt to orate in the House being a complete fiasco; and he resigned his office after a few months with a cheerful alacrity on a pension of £1,500 per annum. This was in March, 1718. His health was already failing, and his estrangement from Steele was completed by Steele's attacks in *The Plebeian* (March, 1719) and his contemptuous replies in *The Old Whig.* His asthma returned shortly after this, and with it the dropsy. He died, aged forty-seven, at Holland

House, on June 17th, 1719, leaving by the Countess one daughter, who survived until 1797. His body, after lying in state in the Jerusalem Chamber, was buried by night in Westminster Abbey. A splendid threnody was written by his devoted admirer, Thomas Tickell.

At considerable risk and danger to himself, after quitting the neutral zone of politics to which *The Spectator* and Addison had committed him, Steele had done his best to ensure the Hanoverian succession (at a time when a pamphlet was a thing of power) in his pamphlet called *The Crisis* (January, 1714), the danger being the supposed tendency of the Tories to dally with the Pretender. When George I. was settled on his throne, Steele was accordingly made a J.P. and a D.L., a surveyor of the royal stable and a supervisor of the T.R., Drury Lane. From these posts he derived an income little if at all inferior to Addison's pension. He also became an M.P. and was knighted, went on projecting periodicals and writing pamphlets, and produced a somewhat solemn comedy, *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), which he dedicated to George I. (500 guineas). In spite of the success of this he was still constitutionally incapable of keeping pace with his creditors. Finally he made a composition with them and retired to Carmarthen, where he died on September 1st, 1729, aged fifty-eight. His two sons, Richard and Eugene, died in 1716 and 1723. A natural daughter was at one time contracted to the erratic Richard Savage.[1]

[1] As Parnell's importance derives from the influence his work exercised over Goldsmith, so Savage's is due almost exclusively to the impression his verse and his conversation made upon Dr. Johnson during the most impressionable portion of his London career. According to his own account, which must seemingly have contained elements of truth, Richard Savage was the infant baptised on January 18th, 1697, at St. Andrew's, Holborn, as Richard Smith, being in reality the bastard son of Earl Rivers and the Countess of Macclesfield.

Though he cannot rank with Addison as a great stylist, Steele was a master of that unembarrassed manner which is "the outcome of unembarrassed matter." He writes, as a rule, less from the head than from the heart. With a free and genial humour he combined a deep and genuine love of virtue, which he expressed in lay sermons among the most perfect of their kind. "As the first painter of domesticity the modern novel owes him much, but the women of his own day owe him more. Not only did he pay them collectively a magnificent compliment when he wrote of Lady Elizabeth Hastings that to love her was a liberal education; but in a time when they were treated by the wits with contemptuous flattery or cynical irreverence, he sought to offer them a reasonable service of genuine respect which was immeasurably superior to those fulsome raptures, guilty impressions, senseless deifications, and pretended deaths with which it was the custom of his contemporaries to insult their understandings."

This lady treated him with inveterate cruelty according to his own somewhat perplexed account, apprenticed him to a cobbler and tried to get him punished with the supreme penalty for an unpremeditated homicide in a midnight brawl. Savage procured his release owing to the intervention of several persons of quality. Henceforth he continued brawling and embroidering his strange story for most of the remainder of his stormy life. He lost all his friends save Johnson by his excesses, and produced little to justify his claims to genius. His tragedy, *Sir Thomas Overbury* (1723), was a failure, and whatever of merit his versification has is to be found in his two heroic poems, *The Bastard* (1728) and *The Wanderer*, in which he moralises more or less poetically upon his own personal misfortunes. A veritable depth of feeling transpires *The Bastard* and informs the rhythm with a rugged solemnity of which many an echo may be found in *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. Having outlived or tired out his most generous patrons, such as Lord Tyrconnel, Queen Caroline, Mrs. Oldfield, and Mrs. Pope, Savage died in prison on August 1st, 1743.

CHAPTER X

MAT PRIOR, GAY, AND OTHER PERFORMERS IN THE SCHOOL OF POPE

"Whatever Prior touched in the light style became golden; and the gay good-humour of the experienced, disenchanted man of affairs makes the reader feel how great must have been the charm of his company, which, according to the report of the Duchess of Portland—'noble, lovely, little Peggy'—caused him to be beloved by every living thing in the house, master, child, and servant, human creature or animal."—COURTHOPE, *A History of English Poetry.*

The familiar style of Prior and Gay—Parnell—Pomfret—Garth—Philips—Akenside—Young.

MATTHEW, or MAT, PRIOR is commonly believed to have been the son of a carpenter at Wimborne, where he was born on July 21st, 1664. His father died when he was yet a child, and he fell to the care of his uncle, Sam Prior, a vintner, who kept the Rhenish wine-house, a fashionable resort as far back as Pepys's time, in Channel Row, Westminster.

Mat's quickness procured his promotion to a seat behind the bar; and when it was discovered by the Earl of Dorset, Sir Fleetwood Shepherd, and other fashionable frequenters that the youth had a happy knack of translating Horace, he was not unnaturally regarded as somewhat of a prodigy. Dorset contributed to his expenses at Westminster, where he became a King's scholar under Busby and made the acquaintance of Charles Montague, afterwards the noted Earl of Halifax. He refused to be separated from his friend and sent to Christ Church, and was, in defiance of tradition, entered at St. John's College, Cambridge (April,

1683), where he was elected a fellow in 1688. In the previous year, in conjunction with Montague, he brought out *The City Mouse and Country Mouse,* an amusing skit in ridicule of Dryden's *Hind and Panther.* These achievements were the making of Prior. His fellowship (like Addison's) sustained him when his party was in the cold shade of opposition. His poetic talent, as shown in the satire, procured him almost instant preferment, for although he complained that the other mouse was advanced first, he had not to wait long. It must be said of the nobles who grew up when Charles II. was king, that no other generation has ever shown itself so responsive to literary talent. In 1691 he was sent as secretary of embassy to The Hague Congress, an assembly of princes and nobles to which Europe then had scarcely, perhaps, seen anything equal. Prior's countenance and address so commended themselves to William III. on this occasion that the King made him a gentleman of his bed-chamber.

In 1694 the death of Queen Mary furnished a theme for every one who could write at all. Prior wrote a long ode, which was presented to the King, by whom it was not likely to be ever read. In two years he was once more in diplomatic employment, at Ryswick and then at Paris, as secretary to the embassy. In 1701 he became M.P. for East Grinstead, and henceforth, like Swift later, he veered rapidly over to the Tories, into the inner circle of which he was rapidly admitted, joining the "16 Brothers" Club of Swift, Harley, and Bolingbroke in 1710. In the same year the Tories came in, and Prior was called back to his old task of treaty-making. He and M. Mesnager did most of the real work preliminary to the Treaty of Utrecht, and when it was signed in 1713, Prior, who had hitherto performed the duties, was promoted to the style and title of English Ambassador at Paris. He returned in March, 1715, to find his enemies in power, and was welcomed by

a warrant for his arrest. He was confined for two years, during which period he wrote his tedious poem in three long octosyllabic cantos called *Alma, or The Progress of the Mind.* When he came out, Harley, Swift, and other friends encouraged him to bring out his collected poems in a subscription folio. This was done, and procured the impecunious poet £4,000, to which Harley added another £4,000 for the purchase of an estate at Down Hall, (celebrated in the ballad) near Hatfield Broad Oak, in Essex. Unhappily his health was already failing; he had a chronic cough, and, like Swift, he suffered from deafness. He died at Harley's seat of Wimpole, where he was on a visit, on September 18th, 1721.

Many of Prior's best poems are short pieces, little more than epigrams, which survive as models of neatness, to be praised perhaps beyond their intrinsic worth, as pioneer work deserves to be, by such masters of the peculiar *genre* (*vers d'occasion*) as Cowper, Thackeray, Locker, and Dobson. No less than fifteen of his short familiar poems find their way into the *Lyra Elegantiarum.*

Though his importance has been a good deal over-rated, Prior remains an interesting figure in English literature, coming as he does between Dryden and Pope. His ideas of finish are by no means up to the Popean standard. As to metre, he tells us that our rhyming heroic measure, as Dryden perfected it, is too confined. He accordingly made a point of running his verses and couplets into one another, and by this means, and a spirited use of the parenthesis and the paragraph, he produced some good and novel effects. Pope almost simultaneously was pulling in exactly the opposite direction. As a matter of fact, however, he often approximates his "Brother" Swift much more nearly than he ever does Pope. He got ideas from Swift, and imitated his octosyllabics as Swift imitated Butler's. Swift is harder, stronger, and more precise;

Prior much more easy, natural, gentleman-like, good-natured, and pleasant.

John, youngest son of William Gay, was baptised at Barnstaple Old Church on September 16th, 1685. In London, after leaving a shop, he found an abettor in his old schoolmate Aaron Hill and another in a Westminster Hall bookseller, who in May, 1708, brought out his poem as *Wine,* suggested by the *Cyder* of John Philips. It was followed by a topical but unacted play on the subject of *The Mohocks,* a tragi-comical farce of 1712. Towards the close of this same year Gay became secretary, or "domestic steward" (a kind of Malvolio), in the household of the Duchess of Monmouth, widow of the would-be usurper, who met with such a tragical fate in 1685. In January, 1713, he inscribed to Pope, as the first of contemporary songsters, his trim Georgic called *Rural Sports.* It is a smooth reflection of Pope's own pastoral, saturated in the false sentiment and poetic diction, so called, of the period, and replete with feather'd choirs and finny broods (it contains, indeed, a minute and rather grotesque description of fly-fishing). In poetic taste Pope was accepted by Gay as an unfailing mentor, and it was with this express encouragement that he went on in December to give to the world another heroic poem in three books on that "agreeable machine" *The Fan;* and his next work of any importance is his pleasing *The Shepherd's Week,* in six pastorals (April 15th, 1714). These "pastorals" were written originally to cast ridicule upon those of "Namby-Pamby" Phillips (Gay was a born parodist), but they contain so much comic humour and droll portraiture of country life that they were soon popular on their own merits as rural poems. The grotesque portions (like those of Greene's pastorals) help to conceal the flimsiness of the texture, while the scheme of the Calendar approved itself strongly to Allan Ramsay, and later on to Crabbe.

Gay's pastorals do not seem, however, to have appealed to the heart of his lady, for in the summer of 1714 he was "turned off," and would have been in a bad case but for the kindness of distinguished literary friends. Swift procured him a secretaryship on an embassage, and when this appointment was cancelled, upon the death of Anne, Pope asked him down to Binfield. While here he wrote, with some hints from Pope and Arbuthnot, a satirical "tragi-comi-pastoral farce" called *What d'ye Call It?* in which he gives us a distinct foretaste of his clever, light, librettist vein and his happy knack for a ballad ("Black-eyed Susan" and "'Twas when the seas were roaring" are both his). It ridiculed a number of the plays in vogue after the manner of *The Rehearsal,* and Gay lost a friend in an offended dramatist (Richard Steele). He gained a hundred pounds. Next year he composed what is probably his best-remembered poem, *Trivia, or The Art of Walking the Streets of London* (published by Lintot, January 26th, 1716), an elaborate imitation and expansion of Swift's *City Shower* and the same poet's uncompromising *Morning.* The idea is good, the verse neat, and the mock heroics are admirable; but the poem owes its fame to its quotability as a photographic picture of London streets in 1715.

In 1720 he collected and published his poems in two large-quarto subscription volumes, and turned £1,000 by the venture, which he proceeded to invest *en bloc* in South Sea Stock. For a moment he was the nominal holder of £20,000 worth, but the crash came and reduced him to "beggary." Meanwhile he had become a more or less regular inmate in the household of Prior's Kitty, the "blooming Hyde with eyes so rare" of his own prologue to *The Shepherd's Week,* who had in 1720 become Duchess of Queensberry.

In 1722 he obtained a small sinecure of £150 a year as a lottery commissioner, and soon began writing for

Prince William (afterwards "Butcher" Cumberland) his famous series of *Fables.* The difficulty of polishing such trifles (as Cowper knew, and tells us in his letters) is inconceivable. It cannot be said that Gay's standard was an inordinately high one, yet it was 1727 before the *Fables* were published by Tonson. Their novelty and ease ensured them an enormous success, which lasted well over one hundred years, and has only begun to wane during the last forty. Yet, apart from one or two specimens supplied by Cowper, they are still the best fables we possess in English verse; nor would it be easy for any fabulist to better *The Hare with many Friends,* a charming *fabliau* with a touch of personal application quite in the manner of the early masters. Gay's *Fables* suffer only in comparison with those of La Fontaine. Compared with the immortal "bonhomme," Gay took little trouble with his work. His *Fables* resemble his *Shepherd's Week* in the fact that, although much applauded, they failed to secure him any permanent advancement.

Gay's next venture was *The Beggars' Opera,* which may be described, without exaggeration, as the first popular success of the modern English stage. It ran for the unprecedented (though not uninterrupted, as has been assumed) space of sixty-two days in London, and then travelled in triumph to the country and even to the Colonies. Like so many *jeux d'esprit* of the epoch, it was suggested by Swift, who once remarked to Gay "that a Newgate pastoral might make an odd, pretty sort of thing," and Gay wrote it at Twickenham, in the same house with Pope and Swift, whose opinion was it was either very bad or very good. It was given at the Lincoln's Inn Fields house on January 29th, 1728. As so often in comic opera, it was one of the numbers—

O ponder well! be not severe—

that turned the scale and made it an intoxicating success, out of which Gay gleaned some £800. A sequel was prohibited, but printed.

Gay's later years were uneventfully spent in the houses of his faithful patrons, the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, at Amesbury and at Burlington Gardens. The Duchess looked after his little comforts, and the Duke invested his savings for him, so that when he died (intestate) some £6,000 was divided between his sisters. After an idle life of undeserved good fortune and much unmanly repining, he died of an inflammation, in spite of the skilled care of Arbuthnot and the unwearying solicitude of his Duchess, on December 4th, 1732. On the night of December 23rd he was interred like a peer of the realm in Westminster Abbey, having as pall-bearers the Earl of Chesterfield, Viscount Cornbury, Mr. Pope, and three other distinguished persons. An imposing monument bears his flippant couplet:

> **Life is a jest, and all things show it;**
> **I thought so once, and now I know it.**

Far less original than either Prior or Gay was the crowd of scholars and gentlemen who wrote with ease, and who adopted for the most part with equal facility the canons and conventions of the magnetic "Mr. Pope." Among them we must certainly enumerate Parnell, Pomfret, Garth, Philips, and Tickell, leaving the more original work of Akenside and Young to conclude the chapter.

Thomas Parnell (1679—1718) was born and educated in Dublin, took orders in 1700, and became six years later Archdeacon of Clogher. He thus came to know Swift, who greatly promoted Parnell's interests, until the date of the poet's early death at Chester in 1718. Parnell's life shows us an easy-tempered, kind-hearted, yet querulous and self-indulgent man, who had rarely a motive higher than to

gratify himself. His ambition was to attain to a metropolitan pulpit, where he could have added the reputation of a popular preacher to that of being the *protégé* of Swift and the pet of the Scriblerus Club. The character of his poetry is in keeping with the temperament of the man. It is slipshod, easy, and indifferently pleasing. If never really original, he has the art of enunciating commonplaces with a certain felicity and grace. The stories he relates are old, but his manner of telling them is new. His thoughts and images are for the most part transported from his commonplace book; but he utters them with an ease of manner and a naturalness which almost tempt one to credit them to Parnell alone. Their chief merit, perhaps, is to have delighted (and pointed the way to) Goldsmith. Parnell's most popular poem is *The Hermit*, a smoothly told apologue (told for the fiftieth time or more: it occurs in the *Gesta Romanorum*) common to many languages and peoples, illustrating the inscrutable justice (if justice it be) of divine providence. His *Elegy to an Old Beauty* contains the now proverbial phrase about "pretty Fanny's way."

As Swift on Parnell, so Addison reflects a ray of gentle light on Thomas Tickell (1686—1740). He was born at Bridekirk, and, like a good Cumberland man, went to Queen's College, Oxford; there he first knew Mr. Addison, at whose invitation he sent papers to *The Spectator*. With the temerity of genius (which he certainly did not possess) he brought out a version of the first book of *The Iliad* almost exactly simultaneously with Pope, and the "Whig dogs" had the indecency to say it was the better of the two; and this was the *fons et origo* of the famous quarrel between Addison and Pope. Tickell clung to Addison to the last, as under-secretary (1717), as literary executor, and finally as elegist. The elegy which he prefixed

to the collective edition of Addison's works in 1721 is certainly one of the noblest exercises in set and formal heroic couplets of the Popean rhythm that exists in our language. Tickell also wrote a ballad of *Colin and Lucy,* marred by one or two absurdities, but surprisingly effective and strong for the taste of the time. He continued in official employment after Addison's death, died at Bath, and was buried at Glasnevin, where he had his home. Tickell's diapason was severely limited; he had only three or four notes, but these notes were true, not metallic, as so much of this imitative work is, but rich and pure.

John Pomfret (1667—1702), rector of Maulden, in Bedfordshire, is known chiefly for his unexpected appearance as a poet in Johnson's *Lives* and Southey's strangely unprovoked query, "Why is Pomfret's *Choice* the most popular poem in the English language?" As a matter of fact, it lingered in elegant extracts and choice specimens, just as some of Longfellow's minor effusions do at the present day. *The Choice* is a commonplace copy of verse upon a theme the most threadbare (it was very popular in Elizabethan times, and vastly better treated). His neatest verses are those addressed *To a Friend inclined to Marry.*

Sir Samuel Garth (1661—1719) was one of the leading physicians of his day, and a makeweight as regards literary eminence to Arbuthnot and Radcliffe. He was a famous Kit-Kat and a good classic; but he lingers on in literary history merely as the author of *The Dispensary* (1699), a mock-heroic poem in six cantos, modelled to some extent upon Boileau's *Lutrin,* and criticising the universe in general, but more particularly defending the College of Physicians against the pretensions and aggressions of the confraternity of apothecaries. He continued to enjoy the friendship both of Pope and Addison (for

whose *Cato* he wrote a once-popular *Epilogue*), was knighted by George I., and, dying on January 18th, 1719, was buried at Harrow.

Another member of Addison's circle was Ambrose Philips (1675—1749), a native of Shropshire, who was educated at St. John's, Cambridge, and made his début as a poet in the same year and in the same volume as Pope, his pastorals being the first and Pope's the last in Tonson's *Miscellany* for 1709. Gay's parodies in *The Shepherd's Week* were modelled upon these pastoral philippics. They were also the vehicle of a deadly insult inflicted on Pope, whose own pastorals Tickell declared that he considered inferior to those of Ambrose.

Pretending to criticise the rival pastorals and compare them, Pope gives the preference to Philips; but quotes all his worst passages as his best, and places by the side of them his own finest lines, which he says want rusticity, and often deviate into downright poetry. The satire hurt, as it was meant to, and Philips bought a rod and hung it up at a popular coffee-house (Button's) in order to carry out his threatened chastisement of Pope in public. The encounter was averted by Pope's prudence.

Philips played his cards sufficiently well to extract some very fair Irish sinecures from the dominant Whig party, but he did not live to "enjoy them." The poems of Philips which please best, says Dr. Johnson, are "those which from Pope or Pope's adherents procured him the name of Namby-Pamby, the poems of short lines by which he paid his court to all ages and characters, from Walpole, the steerer of the realm, to Miss Pulteney in the nursery."

But the machinations of Pope managed to raise a perfect storm of ridicule, which broke over the new versification, as it was called, in numberless parodies and broadsides.

In spite of all the ridicule, however, Philips had a

genuine sensibility and a kindness for the elder music in English poetry which his age for the most part ignored. Thus, in 1723, he brought out *A Collection of Old Ballads* including *Robin Hood, Johnny Armstrong,* and the famous *Children in the Wood* so much belauded by Addison. The ballads are mostly bad versions derived from current broadsides; but the collection, such as it was, was the first of its kind. His only play of any note, *The Distressed Mother,* was derived immediately from Racine's *Andromaque.* He died in Hanson Street, London, on June 18th, 1749.

One of the best rhetoricians who came in the wake of Pope was Mark Akenside, the son of a respectable butcher of the dissenting persuasion at Newcastle-on-Tyne. *The Gentleman's Magazine* encouraged his poetic ambition when he was a mere boy, publishing a philippic by him against the Spaniards in 1738. He seems to have studied assiduously, without making much effort to acquire practice as a surgeon; and in 1743 he submitted to Dodsley (who had succeeded Tonson, a publisher of poetry) his long blank-verse poem on *The Pleasures of the Imagination.*

By the Pleasures of the Imagination Akenside intended to identify what in modern philosophy would be classified under the heading of "æsthetic emotions"—that is, the pleasurable feelings aroused by historical reverie or by the contemplation of the beauties of nature and art. His conception was based mainly upon the *Characteristics* of Shaftesbury and upon certain of Addison's essays in *The Spectator.* There is great loftiness of sentiment in Akenside, together with a passionate love for liberty and a pious devotion to the records of antiquity (savagely ridiculed by Smollett in *Peregrine Pickle*). The fatal defect in all his poetry is the prosaic quality of the verse. Much of it (note especially the episode of Pisistratus at the beginning of Book III.) is literally prose cut up into lengths;

and he keeps his eyes fixed always not on Shakespeare, but on Pope—and not on Pope's best qualities, but on his artificial diction. The Georgian Pindar (as he fancied himself, says Smollett) died on June 23rd, 1770, *æt.* 48. Johnson says of him, with a sense that is more than single, "He is to be commended as having fewer artifices of disgust than most of his brethren of the blank song."

Edward, son of Edward and Judith Young, was born in June, 1683, at Upham, a little village near Winchester; his father was rector of the parish, and Canon of Salisbury. From Winchester, where John Philips, author of *The Splendid Shilling,* was a schoolfellow, Young went to New College; in 1705-6 the death of his father, and the spectacle of the death-strewn field of Ramilies, left a deep and sombre impression on his mind; in 1708 he obtained a law fellowship in All Soul's. His poem on *The Last Day,* of 1713, tiresome as the emphasis of it is, attracted much attention from the essayists. His tragedies, written under the influence of the mantle of Nat Lee, *Busiris* and *The Revenge* (1719-21), are full of dreary rant and windy declamation, though the last gave to the stage the part of Zanga, a Moor, who was almost as popular as Othello until the revival of Shakespeare under Garrick. His satires on Fame, *The Universal Passion,* which appeared between 1725 and 1728, have little of the personal application of those of Dryden and Pope, and have more affinity with the satiric characters of La Bruyère. Written in smooth and often very effective heroic couplets, they clearly prepared the way for Pope's Essays in Satire which have now so entirely eclipsed them. For a time they were immensely popular, and Johnson said of them that the "distichs have the weight of solid sentiment," while the "points have the sharpness of resistless truth." The antithetic style which we now regard as almost inseparable from the ten-syllable couplet owes much to Young. But his

most noted poem, the *Night Thoughts,* 1742-4, hardly ever read now except under compulsion, but still notorious in France and Germany as well as England and Scotland, is written in sonorous blank verse after the pattern of Thomson and Philips. The original motive of the poem is similar to that of *In Memoriam*—a threnodic complaint—but the strange duality of Young as courtier and curate, worldling and divine in one, stamps the work. No age paid its poets so well as the eighteenth century, and Young was intent on making a goodly sum out of his sorrows and his sublimities. And the author of "Fondness for fame is avarice of air," and "Man wants but little, nor that little long," had no intention whatsoever of being taken too literally. One of his ideas in writing, no doubt, was to produce a corrective to the theories of *The Essay on Man,* and the poet grew more didactic and less elegiac as he went on. The influence of the poem upon the diffusion of poetic melancholy has undoubtedly been very widespread, and may be seen in Blair (*The Grave*), Gray, Collins, Ossian, Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Klopstock, Leopardi, and many others. The *Nuits* was a favourite work of the gentle Robespierre and the sentimental Desmoulins. The poet died at the pretty village of Welwyn, on the borders of Knebworth Chace, where he had been rector since 1730, and where he had written most of the *Thoughts,* on April 4th, 1765. There he was buried by the side of his wife, Lady Elizabeth (a granddaughter of Charles II.). Young is famous for his epigrams: "Procrastination is the thief of time," "A fool at forty is a fool indeed," and

> For her own breakfast she'll project a scheme,
> Nor take her tea without a stratagem.

Less familiar is the charming elegiac use he makes of reverberating his epithets:

Sweet harmonist! and beautiful as sweet!
And young as beautiful! and soft as young!
And gay as soft! and innocent as gay!
And happy (if aught happy here) as good!

Here is very clearly the craftsmanship of a true poet.[1]

[1] There is a good text of Prior's work in the Cambridge English Classics, 1905, and the Select Poems of Prior were edited by Dobson, 1889. Gay has been edited for the Muses' Library by Underhill. There is a notable *étude* of Edward Young, *Sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, by W. Thomas, 1901. His *Works* were edited by Nichols in 1854. An over-severe comparison between Young and Cowper was instituted by George Eliot in an essay called *Worldliness and Other-Worldliness*, reprinted in *Essays from "The Westminster Review"* of 1857.

BOOK V

MORALS AND MEMOIRS

. . .

CHAPTER I

THE RISE OF THE NOVEL

Henry Fielding.

Our English novel's pioneer,
His was the eye that first saw clear
How, not in natures self-effaced
By cant of Fashion and of Taste,—
Not in the circle of the great,
Faint-blooded and exanimate,—
Lay the true field of Jest and Whim
Which we to-day reap after him.
No:—he stepped lower down, and took
The piebald People for his Book.

Ah, what a wealth of Life there is
In that large laughing page of his!
What store and stock of Common-Sense
Wit, Wisdom, Books, Experience!

—AUSTIN DOBSON.

"I never saw Johnson really angry with me but once," says Hannah More. "I alluded to some witty passage in *Tom Jones*." He replied, "I am shocked to hear you quote from so vicious a book. I am sorry to hear you have read it; a confession which no modest lady should ever make."

Richardson and Fielding.

THE novel of to-day envelops us so completely and has become such a pervasive element of the very air our minds breathe, that we do not stop to inquire into its character and properties. People recognise the four time-honoured oceans which envelop the two hemispheres of history and

theology, philosophy and poetry. They would not dream of embarking upon any of these unprovided with a chart and a compass; while they still regard prose fiction as an inland sea, comparatively shallow, and safe to navigate according to rule of thumb, by means of well-recognised landmarks. But prose fiction is no longer a mere inlet; it has developed into a mighty ocean, and has already obliterated many of the old literary coast-lines. In antiquity, strictly speaking, prose fiction is only inferior to verse fiction. But it is only since 1700 that it has developed with a perfectly amazing rapidity to meet the complex, and at the same time urgent needs of expression of by far the most varied, permanent, artificial, and costly society that the world, so far as we know, has ever seen. The novel, as we have it at the present day, may be said in a general way to date from the early Brunswick period in English history from 1719 to 1742. It seems to require an old, large, deep-rooted, many-sided, highly complex civilisation to produce a prose fiction of the first order. Only two modern nations up to the present have been able to achieve it: and those two, as it happens, nations poles apart in thought and habit, though only separated geographically by a strait twenty miles wide. The novel has become the vehicle of every type of idea, moral, social, intellectual, and æsthetic; and in the two great schools referred to prose fiction has become the great missionary in the one case of the Anglo-Saxon, in the other of the Franco-Latin order of ideas. The whole literary soil seems to need long preparation for the novel to flourish in anything like perfection. Its full development is conditioned by a gradually matured national, social, and literary environment, in which novelty is balanced by tradition, variety by uniformity. A library of old novels is an appalling necropolis, for an enormous number of bad ones have to be written, it appears, for one good one to emerge. In

the course of this process, both in French and English literature, the novel has become supreme over every other kind of literary composition. This is conspicuously the case in England, where the Puritan temper broke both music and the drama as popular amusements. The novel has remained, impervious to all attacks, adapted in an almost providential manner to our national habits and special requirements in these later days, until, popularly speaking, a novel has become almost synomynous with "a book." The exuberance of the novel and its comparative indifference to form have endeared it to the national genius; while we feel it to be peculiarly our own, inasmuch as there is no exact counterpart to it in the antique world. Unlike most forms of literary art it has not already been practised with a perfection to which we can scarcely ever hope to attain by some old Hellenic master. For ages, without a doubt, the novel existed and assumed a variety of shapes, but remained unwritten. The first definite traces of it in literary history betray a highly sophisticated form.[1]

In the literature of the seventeenth century, though

[1] Thus the novel, as we first catch a glimpse of it in Herondas, Apuleius, and Petronius, has none of the features of a rudimentary species of literature. It is highly developed, complex, and, one might almost say, rotten. After its rapid decay and the deluge of barbarism, classical civilisation had a kind of Indian summer at Alexandria; and Alexandria in the fifth century was the home of a brilliant school of Greek romancists. There short novels of romantic travel-adventure and thwarted love had a short vogue, and were soon submerged by the predominant militarism and ecclesiasticism of the early Middle Ages. But even in their decline they sent forth a number of sunset rays which have illuminated fiction, and have been reflected so often that they may be said indirectly to have influenced the whole of it. After a long period of more primitive life the novel emerges again towards the end of the Middle Ages in the romances of

romances, novels, and picarescos proper are decidedly rare in England, there are to be found in plenty hints, premonitions, tentative approaches to what was afterwards to be the novel. Such were the character-writings of Overbury, Earle, and their numerous imitators, whose work was frequently imitated or annexed by satirists and descriptive letterwriters. Such, again, were the great prose moralities of Bunyan, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* being a better example of this than *Pilgrim's Progress* itself. Such, again, were the full, interesting, and minute autobiographies which were now beginning to spring up in our literature and to interest the public, not as the doings of magnates, but as the diverting self-revelations of common egoistic men. The positive critical and satirical temper of the age of the Restoration and of the Royal Society is seen more and more in all these productions as

chivalry, and this style of romance is henceforth to form the central theme of fiction. It was the tendency of these romances to cluster round the names of two or three illustrious personages such as Arthur and Charlemagne. They were, in fact, developed by minstrels from the mythical narratives of the early historians, with a strong infusion of enchantments imported by the Crusaders from the East, and by the Spaniards from the Moors. They acquired the name of "romance" because the romance language or vernacular of Gaul, as opposed to the Latin, was the *lingua franca* of the chief *trouvères*. The earliest of these romances extant, of the twelfth and thirteenth century, are in metrical form. Long passages in prose were, however, often interpolated, and the prose romance soon became popular, more particularly in the home—not of its nativity, but of its adoption—the Spanish peninsula, where the most famous of all these romances, the *Amadis de Gaul*, was written by Montalvo about 1470, and printed at Seville some forty years later. Amongst the rivals and successors of *Amadis* it will suffice to mention *Palmerin of England*. The names of many of the most celebrated are enumerated in the early chapters of *Don Quixote*, himself the last of these chivalric conquerors. A subordinate

the seventeenth century approaches its close. The near approach of the modern novel is indicated even more clearly in the improved style, the urbanity, and the gossipy humour of the letters and essays of the age of Anne. In *The Tatler* and *Spectator* are already found the methods and subjects of the modern novel. The De Coverley papers in *The Spectator,* in fact, want nothing but a love thread to convert them into a serial novel of a high order. The time seemed ripe for a sentimental novel, which one might have predicted would have assumed something of *The Vicar of Wakefield* type. It is somewhat unexpected, therefore, that just at this point in the novel's development we encounter a strong reversion to the picaresque type of novel in the first really great work of fiction, in its modern sense, of which our literature can boast—*The Life and Strange Surprising Adventurers of Robinson Crusoe*

type of chivalric romance was the pastoral romance, for which examples sprang up towards the end of the fifteenth century. The admiration of classical idylls brought about by the revival of learning made it natural that romances of this order embellished with poetry, idyllic landscape, and a double portion of amorous sentiment should be grafted upon the heroic romance proper. The great masters of this type or romance were Sannazaro (1458—1530), Montemayor (d. 1561), Guarini, and Tasso. Both these kinds of romance, the heroic and the pastoral, found numerous imitators in England and France.

Scarcely inferior in the influence which they exercised upon the complex novel of the present day are two further types of fiction evolved by the late Middle Ages. These two are first the novelettes as developed by Italian stylists from the popular stories current in the Middle Ages, and collected together in such *recueils* as the *Gesta Romanorum,* or from the popular metric *fabliaux* of the gleemen and minstrels. These stories are frequently given a very licentious and ribald turn by the Italian wits who re-created them. The chief of these were Boccaccio, Sachetti, Ser Giovanni, Straparola, Massuccio, Bandello, and Cinthio. Their historiettes were poured

of York, Mariner (1719). Given a man and a desolate island to produce an enthralling romance—such was the problem which Defoe was to resolve, and, in resolving, to launch a new kind of craft in fiction altogether. The old romance was so devised as almost to preclude the reader from imagining himself in the position of the hero. The picaresque was little better in this respect, for it dealt almost exclusively with hunger-bitten beggars and criminal knaves. But here, in *Robinson Crusoe,* Defoe was working out a problem which every Englishman could feel that he might under certain circumstances have to face, and in the resolution of which he could feel the keenest personal interest. Defoe thus made a great stride by rendering the novel a story of ordinary human concern and everyday experience—not either a narrative of kings and heroes or of the scum of human society. The period of sixty-odd

out from all the presses of Western Europe during the sixteenth century, and had a profound influence upon the development of English fiction. Still more immediate was their effect upon the English romantic drama. From Chaucer to Dryden the influence of the *Decameron* is visible in almost every department of our literature. From Burton's *Anatomy* we learn that one of the favourite amusements of our ancestors was the reading of Boccaccio aloud. Shakespeare, as we know, had recourse to these Italian stories, over and over again, for his plots. Beaumont and Fletcher were equally obliged to them, and to the lighter stories of Cinthio, Bandello, and their French imitators (notably, of course, the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* and the *Heptameron*). These repertories are extremely interesting, as being the scenes of the reconstruction, in new and diverting forms, of the numerous stories, in Protean shapes, from the dawn of civilisation down to the *fabliaux* of the *trouvères.* In literature, as in most things, the form is continually changing, whilst the substance, for the most part, remains unaltered.

The serious and the merry tales, which had been served up so many times on the English stage, as tragedy and comedy, gradually lost their popularity, but the substance of the

years between *La Princesse de Clèves* in 1678 and *Pamela* was that of what we may call the genesis of the *modern* novel by a series of permutations and combinations, and in this process it is a matter of some satisfaction that *Robinson Crusoe* has a prominent share.

During the interval between Sir Roger de Coverley and *Pamela* two trains of influence were at work which favoured the evolution of a strong, durable, and popular prose fiction. The first of these may be termed domestic, the second, foreign. Under the first head we include the development of the individual, and simultaneously that of a large well-to-do urban middle-class. The leisure which this class rapidly created for itself led to the formation of a large and self-conscious town society, curious, hungry for pleasure and new sensations, anxious to be told about themselves. The disrepute into which the drama had

stories was still doing its duty, and the débris of their Renaissance setting still meets the literary explorer and archæologist at almost every turn.

During the seventeenth century, the primacy in prose fiction was transferred from Italy and Spain to France. The large households and gregarious methods of life in the French châteaux, while château life still flourished in France (before the centripetal tendency of the *ancien régime* had absorbed all interest and activity in the central focus of the court, as it began to do from 1662 onwards) made them a very favourable nursery for the cultivation of the long-winded romance. These heroic and historical romances were a natural development from the romances of chivalry, the heroes in both cases being knights who combat for the love of honour, and the honour of love; and the operations in both cases are traced out at enormous length.

The chief writers of this species of romance during the seventeenth century were Gomberville, La Calprenède, and Madame Scudéry; their favourite topics were fictitious exploits, by heroes of antiquity—Scipio, Cyrus, Brutus, Juba, Cleopatra, and the like. One of the most notorious, the *Clélie* of Madame Scudéry, containing the famous *Carte du*

fallen since Collier's attack directed this society by an almost inevitable course into the flowery paths of fiction. The novel, it is true, had a reputation which was for the time being almost as unsavoury as that of the drama, but the novel was not a confirmed ill-doer, and it only needed a touch of genius to create for it a vast congregation of enthusiastic votaries. The foreign influence was the sensation caused over Europe between 1678 and 1731 by the refined sentimentalism of Madame de la Fayette; the importation of satire into the romance of adventure by Le Sage; the new psychological or analytic sentimentality of Marivaux; and the passionate eroticism of Prevost d'Exiles.

Pays de Tendre, was concerning the history of Rome in the last days of the kings. The narrative part of these romances is extravagant and tedious in the extreme; what commended them specially to the taste of their contemporaries was, no doubt, to a large extent, their utility as manuals of conversation, in which Madame Scudéry specially excelled; and secondly their veiled references to notorious personages of the day, which were seldom missing from these romances. Keys, in fact, were often written to elucidate this hidden meaning. These heroic romances may be described as the dominant type of the fiction of the seventeenth century. There were, however, subsidiary forms of the heroic romance, such as the political and the comic, represented by the well-known *Roman Comique* of Scarron and the *Amusemens* of Dufresny; and allied to this last form were a number of comic or satiric imaginary travels, which took a new lease of life at the close of the seventeenth century with the famous *Turkish Spy*. At the same time the novelette obtained a new popularity, through the importation into Europe of *The Arabian Nights*, first translated by Antoine Galland between 1704 and 1717, still in the full bloom of youth and novelty, as far as the Western world was concerned. The chief rival of the heroic romance during the seventeenth century was, however, the Rogue novel, which had its origin in the Spain of Philip II. These little books were sold for the most part in dwarf duodecimos, and could hardly contest for supremacy with the ladies, though they were much sold to suit the pockets of the sterner sex. Tabooed

These four writers carried the novel finally out of its cradle of chronicle and decided the victory of love over every other element in the composition of the novel of the future.

By a singular freak of fortune the *éclat* of this triumph for prose fiction was reaped not by a French writer at all, but by a demure little English tradesman who resembled a guinea-pig, and whose interests, until he was well over forty-five, had never strayed beyond his counter. Through him it came about that, after an interval of nearly thirty years since the position of the literary bodies seem to portend its nativity, the English novel as we now know it,

though it was by the serious, the picaresque romance (so called from the fact that the *picaro* or scamp is always the main character of the narrative) enjoyed a popularity from the close of the sixteenth century, which destroyed the novelettes and the euphuistic tales, and seriously menaced the long-winded ideal romances. The great original of this class of literature was the *Lazarillo de Tormes* of Hurtado de Mendoza, published in 1553. Imitations abounded, the most notable being Aleman's *Life of Guzman de Alfarache* (1599) and Quevedo's more humorous *Life of Paul the Sharper.* In France Charles Sorel essayed a work of the same *genre* in his *Histoire Comique de Francion* of 1622; Nash had attempted an imitation as early as 1594; even in Germany the influence of the *picaro* was felt, as is witnessed by Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus* of 1668. Most of the imitations, however, were sad failures, and England, at least, was better content with versions from the original Spanish.

The rogueries of beggars, the gallantries of rascally valets, the runs of luck, good and bad, of sharpers and demireps, these were the ingredients, worked up into such a delightful *olla podrida,* of all that is most spicy in Spanish roguedom, which made up the brilliant success of Le Sage's *Gil Blas,* which astonished the world in 1715; the same ingredients, with an admixture of buccaneer adventures, historical or travel tracts, and news letters, formed the materials of Defoe's strangely matter-of-fact romances.

The variety of prose fiction thus produced, during the sev-

in which love is the predominant interest, came to a birth with *Pamela* in 1740. Samuel Richardson's contribution to the development of the novel was, indeed, almost what Harvey's discovery of the heart's action was to the study of medicine. There had, it is true, been "Richardsonians before Richardson"; it was, nevertheless, *Clarissa,* more than any other single work, which carried the novel from the book-closet of the entresol to the library on the first floor.[1]

Love *in vacuo* has been well described as the beginning

enteenth century, will be seen to be very great, and the futility of tracing the origin of the modern novel to any one source or fountain or period will be manifest. For a hundred years subsequent to the appearance of *Euphues* and *Arcadia,* England lagged far behind France and Spain in prose fiction; upon the appearance of Defoe, England began to do something to redress the balance; it was not, however, until the 'forties of the eighteenth century that the English began to show what they could really do in the direction of the novel of contemporary life.

All nations, says M. Jusserand, have had novels, several have had admirable ones earlier in point of date than those of England; it is none the less true that the English have contributed more than any other people to the formation of the contemporary novel. From the time of Richardson and Fielding, when they first began to apply to this style of literature the qualities they have exhibited in other styles, combining the gift of *observation* peculiar to their dramatists with the *analytic subtlety* of their philosophers, and the *passionate ethical sincerity* of their apostles, the English have become the great masters of the novelist's art. "Voltaire, thinking of Locke, regretted that the philosophers of England were not the preceptors of the human race. If they have finished by becoming it, it is, above all, to the novelist of England that the result is due."

[1] Of these early novels of sentiment the most notable are *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) of Madame de la Fayette and the *Mémoires du Comte de Comminges* of the Marquise de Tencin, the mother of D'Alembert. Better known now, and a

and end of the pastoral romance proper. It was a necessity that the shepherds and shepherdesses who make up its characters should not be professionals, but should follow sheep for love—that they may live *plus doucement et sans contrainte.* Our best example of this pastoral kind of romance in English is Sidney's *Arcadia,* "that gallant legendry," as Gabriel Harvey calls it, the staple of which is made up of amorous courting and paronomasia or intricate and extravagant play upon words. This last quality passed away with the decline of the drama in England, but the long-drawn-out love dalliance was destined for a longer life. Sidney's influence in this kind reached down to the second birth of the novel in England. Pamēla, a name shortened in pronunciation to Pamela, came to life again—no longer a princess, but a servant-girl; she was

more immediate predecessor of Richardson, was Marivaux, whose unfinished novel, *Marianne,* was published between 1731 and 1741. His only less famous *Paysan Parvenu* dates from 1735-6. The sentiment and even the main idea of *Marianne* were similar to that of Richardson's *Pamela*—a proof of how similar conditions produce like effects, for it is highly improbable that Richardson knew anything of Marivaux. So inferior, however, was *Marianne* in directness of appeal, in concentration, and in intensity, that whereas Richardson founded a school, *Marianne* found no imitators and few enthusiasts. In the same year with the first part of *Marianne* appeared the seventh volume of the *Mémoires et Aventures d'un Homme de Qualité* containing the *Histoire du chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut,* one of the most exquisite literary gems, whether as a story of intense love or as a modern work of art, which the eighteenth century was to produce. Before Fielding, the first and last resource of the novelist was the coquette. Of all these coquettes one only still charms us irresistibly—the frail but passionate *Manon Lescaut.* M. Jusserand gives to us the palm in the building up of the novel. Let us return the compliment by expressing the conviction that the prologue of *Manon Lescaut* is the real threshold of the modern novel.

introduced to the public by no knight, but by a fat and prosy Fleet Street bookseller, whose passion was not poetry but morality, and she has lived on to this day.[1]

In Samuel Richardson himself it is impossible to take much interest. One of the numerous children of a respectable joiner, he was born in 1689, was pious and assiduous in all his duties, the industrious apprentice first of Fleet Street and then of Salisbury Court, where he carried on business as a master-printer down to his death at Parson's Green, on July 4th, 1761.[2] From 1739 he had a country house at North End, Hammersmith, near the turnpike, where he endured with a perfect complacency the flatteries of a circle of female adorers, and where he wrote his novels —the novels of this demure little printer of Salisbury Court, which thrilled all Europe.

The character of Richardson deserves all the praise it has received from his biographer, Mrs. Barbauld. His integrity and industry were unfailing, and in material affairs he was generous; but his extreme vanity made him repellent to all but professed devotees, and the pusillanimity with which Johnson charged him, "the perpetual study to ward off petty inconveniences and to procure petty pleasures," is to be seen in his works in that attention to the infinitely little which is their weakness and their

[1] Richardson is thus the direct inheritor of the analytic and sentimental method of romance which Sidney had developed before him. Of Sidney's disciples in England the best known is Thomas Lodge, whose *Rosalind* is more expressly described as a legacy of *Euphues*, to the style of which it is true that it aspires, but it is thoroughly Arcadian in its subject-matter. Other imitators of Sidney, either directly or indirectly through his French admirers, were Lady Mary Wroth, whose *Urania* appeared in 1621, and Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, whose *Parthenissa* first saw the light in 1654, and later and very feebly by John Crowne, the dramatist, in his *Pandion and Amphigenia* of 1665.

[2] He was buried in St. Bride's Church.

strength. He was formal, passionless, and unsympathetic. When he was young his seniors confided in him, but in his later years his stiffness alienated his juniors; "my daughters," he said, "are shy little fools." The famous council that criticised and applauded the drafts of his later novels consisted entirely of women, and included Miss Mulso, afterwards Mrs. Chapone, and the sisters of Henry Fielding. Johnson, though friendly to Richardson, tells us that he died for want of a change of flatterers.

In 1739 two booksellers (*i.e.* publishers), Rivington and Osborne, urged Richardson to compile a small volume of letters on the concerns of common life for the use of people unfamiliar with epistolary forms—such a book, they said, being greatly in demand. One of the first of these exemplary letters which it occurred to Richardson to write was one from a modest young lady's maid to her virtuous parents, explaining the dangers to which she was exposed (in an otherwise excellent situation) by the advances of the youthful master of the house. The subject expanded under Richardson's manipulation; he had, as a youth, written love-letters for young lady friends, and he had a predilection for patiently developing a sentimental situation, and a feminine instinct for telling his hearers "all about it." As he progressed he began to think, he tells us, that the story, if written in an "easy and natural manner, suitable to the simplicity of it, might possibly introduce a new species of writing." In two months the two volumes of the original *Pamela* were finished. The book was published at the close of 1740, and it very soon bore out the author's prediction as to its being the forerunner of a new species of writing.

By blending with a curious art an air of minute reality worthy of Defoe, with a love intrigue of interminable length, Richardson had evolved the new species of sentimental romance which immediately won for itself, between

the picaresque and the old heroic romance, a place superior to either.

Instead of the rogue we now have the designing villain; instead of the incidents of combat, there is analysis of character. Richardson was the first to trust entirely for his effects to the affections of home and to the accessories of ordinary life. He first showed how the imagination could be captured without the extraneous aid of marvellous events or racy narrative. By his manipulation of the theme of Love he could renew the situations without tiring his readers. His themes exactly suited the rapidly increasing middle-class of readers, who were eager to hear about themselves.

The epistolary form which Richardson adopted (in preference to the direct narrative or the autobiography) lent itself to the slow, minute development of a few characters, for which he had such an extraordinary faculty. Many subtle touches are added by the constant "repercussion" of theme. Each writer is narrating not events alone, but his or her reflections on previous narrations of the same events. As when an important event occurs to-day one has first the home comments, then the foreign comments, then the home comments upon the foreign comments, and so on, until a new event distracts attention; so in Richardson, upon the most trifling occurrence is superimposed, first a lengthy letter describing it, then a letter of assent or approval of the manner in which it is described, and then a letter appreciating the approval, with additional reasons why it is just. The method is almost fatal to a story; but then, as Johnson remarked, no one ever read Richardson for that. Few things in real life are more revealing, as far as character is concerned, than letters, and when new deposits of them are discovered, as in the case of Madame de Maintenon, Hume, Cromwell,

and Napoleon, they generally compel us to reconstruct, or at least to modify, our conceptions. In the hands, therefore, of a master of this species of writing like Richardson it was natural that, far from hampering, they should even aid the process of minute delineation.

A poor sequel to *Pamela* was published by Richardson in 1741. Soon afterwards he began his masterpiece, *Clarissa,* working at it deliberately until eight volumes were completed, and all published by the end of 1748. *Pamela* is said to have absorbed Diderot to such an extent that in answer to questions upon personal matters he was wont to reply abstractedly, "O! mes amis, Pamela!" But the European reputation of *Pamela* was far eclipsed by that of *Clarissa.* Richardson was classed with Shakespeare and Homer; and Stendhal, many years later, spoke of his work as an *Iliad.* Klopstock's enthusiasm was so great that he sought a position in London so as to be near the author. The English novel, as represented by *Clarissa,* gave in France, in Germany, in the North, and even in Italy the impression of a new species of literature like no other—"emancipated in its magnificent flight from antique models, perfectly free from traditional influence." All the novelists imitated, or at least were influenced by, Richardson, from Rousseau and Marmontel right down to the suicide of Werther. In *Paul et Virginie* we observe a distinct combination of the influence of two very diverse masterpieces of English fiction, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Clarissa.* Even more surprising, perhaps, than the incoherent rapture of Diderot and his friends, and the ejaculations of "Richardson! O Richardson!" is the admission of the contemptuous Lady Mary Wortley that she had sobbed scandalously over *Clarissa,* or the dictum of Chesterfield that the little printer, though he lacked style, understood the heart.

Clarissa Harlowe is one of the marvels of literature,[1]—first, by reason of its universal success among the best intellects of the day, and secondly, on account of the neglect into which it has fallen since. The apparent inconsistency will perhaps be settled by Richardson, like Dr. Johnson, retaining a great reputation without being much read. Yet a book which, like *Clarissa,* achieves the most difficult task in literature—that of painting a true woman—should not be difficult to read, nor does it, as a matter of fact, tax the patience of the reader to an extent that is unfamiliar to the reader of Scott, or Balzac, or, indeed, many other of the greatest romancists. The reader finds in Richardson no ingenious plot, no brilliant *dénouement;* but he is, nevertheless, confronted by genuine human passion, and if he be studying the novel chronologically,

[1] *Clarissa Harlowe* is a History (Richardson would have never called it a novel or a romance) in ten volumes, with thirty-two principal personages, and the narrative is conducted by letter.

Clarissa begins by writing to her friend Miss Howe to tell her how it all began. The elegant and brilliant Lovelace was introduced into the family of Harlowe as an aspirant to the hand of Clarisssa's elder sister, Arabella. Not really caring for Arabella, he falls a victim to the attractions of Clarissa. The brother, James, opposes the match, ostensibly because he distrusts and despises Lovelace, really because he detests Clarissa, who had come in for a snug legacy from the grandfather while he was left out in the cold. The slighted Arabella naturally gives him what aid she can in calumniating Lovelace to the Harlowe family. James accordingly provokes Lovelace to a duel, and is wounded. Mistress Harlowe, terrified for the safety of her favourite son, persuades Clarissa to correspond with Lovelace and propitiate him as far as possible. She receives passionate but respectful letters from this fascinating rip, and soon begins to think of him to the exclusion of all other subjects. The Harlowes, getting alarmed, plan a marriage between Clarissa and Mr. Solmes, a rich brute, altogether unacceptable to the young lady. Family pressure of

he is enabled for the first time to realise its potentiality as an instrument of analysis—the analysis of the human heart. The reader of *Clarissa* is as one who should find in a forgotten drawer which he is ransacking a packet of old letters, yellow with age. "With a careless glance you skim a page, then two pages, then three. Then, in spite of yourself, your curiosity is piqued. The letters refer to an old, a very old, love-story, the actors in which are unknown; the names convey nothing to you, the action passes in a far-off land. You see what a mastery this history obtains over you. Like a perfume half evaporated, a vibrating human interest emanates still from these fading leaves; the names begin to take colour, the shadows become animated, these old memories live and move before one's eyes. The hours glide by, and still one reads with a gentle emotion lulled by the rhythm of this life, so long a thing of the past. On a sudden the story becomes intensely pathetic, the anguish is poignant, a cry of despair goes up from the depths of the past. 'How this tale is

the severest kind is brought to bear upon her. She is only allowed out of her room to interview the unworthy Solmes. Yet she goes on writing to Lovelace, who drops vague menaces, which have the desired effect upon Madame Harlowe.

The letters multiply, they cross, repeat themselves, are copied, accumulate in great stacks. Clarissa, confined as she is to her room, corresponds with her sister, her brother, her uncle; receives, transcribes, and comments upon their responses, which she forwards to Miss Howe. Then we have Miss Howe's comment upon it all. Clarissa writes never, never, to Mr. Solmes, who replies "Wait and see." All this time Lovelace is in hiding in a hut or small tavern upon the estate; he has bribed a footman who tells him all that is going on. The relatives arrange that Clarissa shall be married in fifteen days. Clarissa's Aunt Hervey goes down on her knees to her; Clarissa goes down too, and they discuss the matter in that posture. But nothing is decided. Finally Clarissa is threatened with an unscrupulous uncle in the country who

affecting me!' one exclaims half involuntarily, with eyes not perhaps of the dryest." Such is the experience of a Frenchman who reads *Clarissa Harlowe* to-day. If, he concludes, realism is the art of giving persons the impression of life, then Richardson is one of the greatest of all realists.

The English novel gained enormously by the shock of opposition between the diverse ideals of Richardson and his rival Henry Fielding. Because Richardson was perpetually mouthing "morality," while Fielding took for his heroes avowed scamps and introduced the language of country squires in all its natural grossness, it was commonly assumed at the time that the tendency of Richardson was Sunday and edifying, while that of Fielding was decidedly shady. We should hardly take this view now. The copy-book morality of Richardson, with its perpetual insistence upon the value (especially the cash value) of

will force the marriage on. At this crisis the wicked Lovelace, by a skilful ruse, carries her off in a postchaise. The details are explained in letter after letter. Lovelace entrusts her safe-guarding to a very wicked woman in his pay, called Sinclair. Thence she finally escapes to Flask Walk, Hampstead. Her virtues finally attract universal sympathy; but her health is undermined—she is dying. Bedford, former companion of Lovelace's orgies, watches over her as if she were a sister. The lodging-house people treat her as if she were their daughter. She takes advantage of it to recount the whole story of her sufferings to them. Even in her failing health and growing infirmity she finds strength to talk like a book, to edify the whole world, to solemnly pardon Lovelace, and to write, in addition to her last will and testament, three or four letters of ten pages each per day. Nay, on her death-bed she hands over twelve epistles to Bedford, who promises to distribute them in the proper quarters. Even Death cannot put a stopper on her correspondence. Clarissa's cousin, Colonel Morden, provokes Lovelace to a duel, kills him, and then takes up the pen of Clarissa herself to compile an epistle in five chapters describing the obsequies of the heroine.

chastity and the morbid analysis to which this theme is subjected—this it is at the present day which is in danger of being regarded as prurient; nor can the charge be fairly denied, at least as regards *Pamela*. The virtue of Fielding, with its broad tolerance for "slips" and wild oats, is seen to be fundamentally a much nobler and more generous creed, not concentrated upon one or two departments of human conduct, but distributed with philosophic breadth and insight over the whole. Fielding, indeed, is the antithesis of Richardson, and represents the opposite pole of English character. He is the Cavalier, Richardson the Roundhead; he is the gentleman, Richardson the tradesman; he represents church and county, Richardson chapel and borough. Richardson had much of the patient insight and intensity of genius, but he lacked the humour and literary accomplishment which Fielding possessed in such large measure. Fielding, indeed, combined breadth and keenness, classical culture, and a delicate Gallic irony to an extent rare among English writers. He lacks the noble and delicate intuition of Richardson in the analysis of women, nor could he compass the broad farcial humour of Smollett or the sombre colouring by which Smollett sometimes produces such wonderful effects of contrast. There was no *poetry* in Fielding, but there was practically every other ingredient of a great prose writer—taste, culture, order, vivacity, humour, and irony delicately blended, and, above all, a penetrating common-sense. Of the race of Cervantes and Molière, he is unquestionably the great man of letters of the 'forties and 'fifties. And if Fielding the man is a corrective to Richardson, what shall we say for Fielding's masterpiece *Tom Jones*—the pivotal novel in the history of English fiction? In the direct method in which the story is told, in the gradual concentration of plot, and acceleration of the action, in the chorus of comment and criticism of life kept up by the author in

supplement to the narrative, in the affectation of an epical tone, and in the general balance and arrangement of characters, and their final disposal before the ringing down of the curtain, *Tom Jones* supplied a working model to the novelists of the next century. It summed up and transferred from the stage to the novel a number of dramatic qualities and tricks which Fielding had painfully acquired during his apprenticeship. It perpetuated, we must add, the vicious habit of interpolating long narratives quite independent of the main story—a precedent the force of which is seen very clearly in the recognition paid to its authority by Dickens. But the influence of *Tom Jones* is so ubiquitous and so universal that to attempt to trace it would be to commit oneself to a monograph upon the novel in England. Enough to say that upon the character contrast between Tom, an idle, thoughtless, rattling rascal, with no deeply ingrained vice, however, and nobody's enemy but his own, and Master Blifil, "a prudent, discreet, sober young gentleman, strongly attached to the interest only of one single person," Fielding constructed a novel of character, love, adventure, and dramatic incident, which combined the best features of all the *genres* which prose fiction had yet evolved, with a good many excellent new features of its own, in such a way as to establish a standard model in fiction and to point the way to the conquest of an enormous new territory. The result was almost immediately seen. During the seventeenth century, and down to the time of George II., England had been content to import and translate fiction upon a great scale. The tide of importation now rapidly began to ebb, until in 1755 we have Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in Italy receiving boxes full of novels from her daughter in England. This was prophetic of the great export trade that England was to have in the redintegrated novel. Almost simultaneously England began to produce her own painters and her own masters of prose fiction.

Fielding, whose grandfather was a cadet of a noble family, and who was himself a cousin to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, was born in Somerset on April 22nd, 1707. His father Edmund, a lieutenant under Marlborough, made a runaway match with a daughter of Sir Henry Gould of Sharpham Park. His mother died when he was eleven. He was schooled at Motcombe, near Sharpham Park, by a tutor whom Fielding afterwards caricatured as Trulliber, subsequently at Eton, and he also went for a short while to study at Leyden, taking a degree in the faculty of Letters, and returning to London in 1728.

He had little to depend on but his wits, for his father had married again and he could no longer count upon an allowance. He was at this time a tall, handsome young man, well-knit, and exceptionally robust, with a keen appetite for pleasure and a loathing for work. Being "proffered the choice to turn hackney-coachman or hackney-writer," he chose the latter alternative. He turned to the theatre for aid, and began a long dramatic career with *Love in Several Masques* played at Drury Lane in February, 1728. In the next few years he produced comedies and farces (some given to the world anonymously) with great rapidity.[1] His plays are journeyman's work, a sort of rough carpentry, for which his mocking humour and youthful affectation of cynicism served him well. The model he kept in view was the artificial comedy of Congreve, but it was a Congreve depressed by duller audiences than those of Queen Anne's day. He wrote with extravagant haste, and as we read we can still hear him damning the man who invented fifth acts.

Nevertheless, his apprenticeship as a playwright was of value to the novelist, and Fielding, though young and inexperienced, was a brilliant apprentice. His plays obtained no great dramatic success. The two best, from a stage point

[1] One of these was printed "As it was damned at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane."

of view, are probably *The Mock Doctor* and *The Miser*, after Molière; but, like Thackeray's early work before he achieved real greatness with *Vanity Fair*, they are of considerable interest as easel-pieces to the literary student; they are, moreover, bright and readable throughout. It is credibly reported of his capital burlesque, *Tom Thumb the Great* that it evoked a laugh from Swift, who only laughed twice in his life. In 1735 Fielding, having married, aspired to managerial honours; he bought the little French theatre in the Haymarket and brought out *Pasquin* (a burlesque patterned on *The Rehearsal*), an amusing dramatic squib, which had an enormous run, and was followed by another dramatic satire, called *The Historical Register*. The success unhappily involved exasperating "Old Bob" (Sir Robert Walpole), and the Licencing Act of June, 1737, put a term to Fielding's dramatic labours.[1]

A somewhat obscure interval in Fielding's life follows (during which he was probably living in chambers and trying to practise at the Bar, contributing occasional essays to *The Champion* the while), and lasts down to February, 1742, which saw the appearance of *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his friend Mr. Abraham Adams*. The hero of this remarkable parody was the brother of Richardson's Pamela, whose experiences had been made known to the world in 1740. Joseph, like his sister, was tempted by a person far above him in station —in this case, a dissolute woman of fashion—and some amusing passages in the first few chapters burlesque the manœuvres of the maid in her far from artless resistance to the base designs of the squire "Mr. B.," whose real name Fielding discovered was Mr. Booby. The caution of the heroine, and the revulsion by which Pamela, from

[1] The immediate cause of offence was a scurrilous farce called *The Golden Rump*, in which H. F.'s collaboration is somewhat problematical.

the stern assertor of chastity, becomes the grateful adorer of the rake the moment he speaks of the chaplain, constitute genuinely assailable points in Richardson's work, published though it was "to cultivate the principles of virtue and religion." Richardson not unnaturally ascribed the motive of the burlesque to a low feeling of jealousy, but jealousy was not one of Fielding's failings. Fielding was, no doubt, prompted by much the same feeling that spurred Thackeray to burlesque Lytton—a feeling of reaction against the morbid tendencies of Richardson's work.

He was well read in French, and there is good reason to suppose that he may have been acquainted with the *Paysan Parvenu,* the autobiography of a footman who repels the advances of his master's wife, and eventually marries a wealthy *dévote.* If so, the circumstance forms another link between Marivaux and the genesis of the modern English novel.

Fielding's genius for the development of character, having once found scope, was not to be confined within the bounds of a mere travesty. The story soon follows a free course of development, the writer's art being lavished with a free hand upon the character of Parson Adams—a noble example of primitive goodness and childlike Christian altruism. Adams (whose original was a certain eccentric William Young) is in many respects Fielding's finest and most original conception, and the character seems to represent in some measure Fielding's own free but generous philosophy.

In the year after the appearance of *Joseph Andrews* the three volumes of Fielding's miscellanies were published. The first volume contained his quaint satirical essays (at a distance after Swift these, as first comedies after Congreve), *On Conversation* and *On Nothing;* the second has his *Journey from this World to the Next,* a *jeu d'esprit* after Lucian or Cyrano de Bergerac, in which is apparent

that acuteness as a literary critic that he afterwards displayed so conspicuously in the interchapters of *Tom Jones,* but which, like much of Fielding's prose when he is not depicting character, shows signs of haste and langour; the third volume is occupied by his strange *History of the Life of the late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great,* a subtle, prolonged satire upon spurious greatness of all kinds, and a model of sustained and sleepless irony. It is singular that three such great masters of prose fiction as Fielding, Smollett, and Thackeray, should have each attempted a performance of this kind. *Wild* is rather too long, but portions of it (especially the opening and closing chapters) far surpass anything in *Ferdinand Count Fathom* or *Barry Lyndon,* and place Fielding definitely second to Swift in ironic power among English prose writers.

For some years previous to 1748 Fielding must have been living in considerable distress both in regard to body and estate. His robust frame and magnificent constitution had been impaired by a life of careless pleasure; he had rapidly run through his wife's money, and must occasionally have experienced the hospitalities of sponging-houses. To add to his distresses, his beautiful and adored first wife had died in 1743, and it was not until November, 1747, that he found consolation by marrying his first wife's maid, Mary Daniel. She justified his choice by proving a devoted wife and an excellent mother to his children.[1]

In December, 1748, through the kindness of an old schoolfellow (see preface to *Tom Jones*), Fielding was appointed Justice of the Peace for Westminster, and settled in Bow Street. The post was a very important one, involving the police administration of practically the whole of the rapidly increasing West End; but it was underpaid ("some of the dirtiest money on earth") and ill-esteemed. From 1742 until after his appointment Fielding made no sign to the world of letters. His health was bad, and the

[1] She survived him until 1802, with four children.

bailiffs were probably worse; but his inherited buoyancy was enormous, and he had during all this period been progressing slowly with his great novel, *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling,* which appeared on February 28th, 1749.

Fielding, who had made something under £200 by *Joseph Andrews,* made at least £700 by his new venture, which was popular from the first, and was promptly translated and dramatised; and since its appearance all the very best judges have sounded its praise. Hazlitt and Coleridge agree that the plot is "almost unrivalled." At the same time the feeling of the general principles of human nature operating in particular circumstances is always intense, and incident and situation are used only to bring out character. The epical quality of *Tom Jones* is touched on by Byron when he calls its author "our prose Homer," its satirical energy by Hazlitt when he compares Fielding with Hogarth, and its monumental character by Gibbon when he speaks of it outliving the Escurial. Thackeray's tribute to his great predecessor (in the preface of *Pendennis*) as the depictor of *"a man"* studied from no draped model is well known; but the greatest compliment it ever received, perhaps, was from the clever, sardonic Lady Mary Montagu, who inscribed in her copy the words *Ne plus ultra.*

Fielding's training had been too literary and too critical for him to confine his energies, even in a novel, entirely to the requirements of fictitious narrative, admirably though these lent themselves to his special gifts as a master of irony and the comic spirit. Thus at the beginning of each book he interpolates one of those delightful prolegomenous essays in which, ever and anon, as George Eliot says, he seems to bring his armchair to the proscenium and chat with us in all the lusty ease of his fine English. It may be doubted whether the book has one single charac-

ter equivalent in merit to that of Parson Adams; but in Squire Western, Partridge the barber, the philosopher Square, his rival Thwackum, Miss Bridget Allworthy, Mrs. Honour, the lady's-maid, and most fascinating of heroines Miss Sophia Western, he has created a group of living characters who will live and be born again in a bewildering variety of forms as long as prose fiction subsists among us.

Amelia followed *Tom Jones* on December 19th, 1751, upon which day the first edition was exhausted. It was dedicated to Ralph Allen, the Squire Allworthy of the previous novel. If the plot is inferior to that of *Tom Jones,* the descriptions and characters, and especially the pathetic delineation of his first wife in the heroine, are second to none in prose fiction. Fielding's only regular literary performance after *Amelia* was a bi-weekly critical paper called *The Covent Garden Journal,* which he brought to an end in November, 1752. He had long suffered from suppressed gout, and in 1754 he retired to a little house at Fordhook, in the parish of Ealing, a place which he held to have the best air in the kingdom, far superior to that of Kensington gravel pits (which was, it will be remembered, one of the health-resorts of Swift). But he dreaded another winter even in the climate of Ealing, and decided on a voyage to Lisbon on a forlorn hope of recovery. His hopefulness was up to the last as inveterate as his improvidence. At Lisbon he died on October 8th, 1754. Let the travellers to Lisbon, says Borrow, in the opening chapter of his delightful *Bible in Spain,* repair "to the English church and cemetery, Père la Chaise in miniature, where, if they be of England, they may well be excused if they kiss the cold tomb, as I did, of the author of *Amelia,* the most singular genius which their island ever produced." The sweet and long-suffering character of Amelia (a portrait in some measure of his still-cherished

Charlotte), is, indeed, one which the creator of Hermione and Virgilia might be proud of having delineated.

The year after his death appeared Fielding's *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon,* a charming piece of literature.

That *Tom Jones* has not retained its place more securely in the hearts of the reading multitude is attributable mainly to the fact that so large a portion of its fire has been stolen by the creators of subsequent masterpieces, such as *Vanity Fair, Pendennis, Nicholas Nickleby,* and *Charles O'Malley,* who have succeeded in combining some of Fielding's distinctive excellence with not a few of their own; it has been the same with all the novels of Fielding's age. The old wine has been strained and re-bottled with such masterly skill that the old receptacles are in danger of being forgotten. Fielding and Smollett are no longer hidden under the sofa cushions; they are neglected, on the top shelf.[1]

[1] The standard *History of Prose Fiction* is still that of J. C. Dunlop (revised edition, Bohn, 1896). See also Jusserand's *English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare* (1890), F. M. Warren's *History of the Novel previous to the Seventeenth Century* (1895), W. Raleigh's *The English Novel* (1894), W. L. Cross's *Development of the English Novel* (1899), Bliss Perry's *Study of Prose Fiction* (1903), the studies by Salverte and Rohde on the novel of antiquity (1894 and 1900), F. W. Chandler's *Picaresque Novel in Spain* (1901), Morillot on the *Roman en France de 1610* (1893), and the excellent monographs of André Le Breton on the *Roman* of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries respectively (1890-1901). Richardson's *Works* have been edited by Mangin (1811), Scott (the Novelist's Library), Leslie Stephen (1883), and Ethel McKenna (20 vols., 1902). In addition to the famous *Eloge* by Diderot, there are Memoirs by A. Dobson (1900) and Clara L. Thompson (1900), and studies by Jeffrey, Stephen, Traill, Birrell, Texte, Oliphant, Le Breton, Larroumet, Schmidt, and Donner. There are good modern editions of Fielding by Stephen (1882), Saintsbury (1893), Maynardier (1903), and Henley (1903), and there are Memoirs of the novelist by

Arthur Murphy (1762), Scott (1821), T. Roscoe (1840), Thackeray (1853), Frederick Lawrence * (1855), Austin Dobson (1883 and 1900), and Leslie Stephen (*Dict. Nat. Biog.* and *Hours in a Library.*) See also *Selected Essays of Henry Fielding*, ed. G. H. Gerould (1905), Andrew Lang's *Letters on Literature* (1893), and Henley's *Views and Reviews* (1895). There are handy editions of Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne in Hutchinson's Classic Novels. The best complete editions of Smollett are Roscoe's (1841), J. P. Browne's (8 vols., 1872), Saintsbury's (12 vols., 1895), and Constable's (introduction by Henley) (12 vols., 1899-1901). Of Sterne there are editions by Browne, Saintsbury, in the Standard Library, Temple and World's Classics; and innumerable separate editions of *Tristram* and the *Sentimental Journey.* Thackeray is seen at his very worst in moralising upon Sterne. Traill, "Q.," Elwin, Stephen, Herbert Paul, and Charles Whibley have done their best to redress this wrong. Excellent French contributions are by Montégut, Edmond Scherer, Texte, and Paul Stapfer.

CHAPTER II

THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

"If every copy of *Tristam Shandy* were destroyed to-morrow, its influence upon style and thought would remain."—HERBERT PAUL, *Men and Letters.*

Smollett—Sterne—Minor novelists.

TOBIAS SMOLLETT completes the trio of our proto-novelists. As a novelist pure and simple he is less than Richardson or Fielding, but he is quite remarkable as one of the earliest eminent men of letters of all work. Poet, playwright, historian, publicist, topographer, translator, satirist, periodical critic, lampooner, and novelist, he wrote skilfully and fluently on almost every conceivable subject, and for a short period during the interregnum between Pope and Johnson, he was a kind of literary Protector. Tobias George Smollett, to give him his full name, was born at Dalquhurn, near Bonhill, Dumbartonshire, in 1721. He was a cadet of an old Scots family, and had a fairly good education at Dumbarton and Glasgow; but he was thwarted in his desire to enter the army, and was apprenticed to a doctor of medicine. After three years of simmering discontent, he determined, in 1739, to seek his fortune in London. His journey southwards with his tragedy, *The Regicide,* in his pocket, is described with infinite spirit in the earlier chapters of *Roderick Random,* which are quite among the best he ever wrote. How far these are autobiographic has been disputed, but each of four separate claimants to the honour of being the original Strap vowed that he had shared with Smollett the vicissitudes ascribed in the novel to Random and his comrade. He lost no time in

submitting his play to Lord Lyttelton, the patron of his countryman, James Thomson. Months elapsed before Lyttelton, with vague politeness, deprecated the honour of sponsorship for the play, which was, indeed, exceptionally bad. Smollett retorted at once in his cross-grained way by discarding his patron. Seven years later he savagely parodied Lyttelton's *Monody* upon the death of his wife. Despairing of success as a poet, he got a post as surgeon on a King's ship, and was present off Cuba during the operations of Admiral Vernon. We next find him a surgeon in Downing Street, and in 1746 he wrote a lament upon the rigorous suppression of the Jacobite rebellion, entitled *The Tears of Scotland.* He had in a remarkable degree the *perfervidum ingenium scotorum,* but he had none of the diplomatic talent that has made eminent physicians of so many of his countrymen. He would probably have become another Ralph—a competent hack-writer and party pamphleteer—had not the success of *Pamela* and of *Joseph Andrews* (1740-41) impelled him to try his hand at prose fiction. Analytical methods had no attraction for him, and he was not strong at constructing a plot. He fell back, therefore, upon the picaresque romance as developed in *Gil Blas.* He admits that he used the immortal novel of Le Sage as a model, but he devoted much more attention than his master to the development of eccentric character, and in his fondness for rich grotesque colouring he shows the influence of Ben Jonson and Shadwell, and also of the well-known class of "character"-writers of the seventeenth century. His indebtedness to Fielding is more immediate and more obvious. The two small volumes of *Roderick Random* were published in 1748. The author's name was not on the title, and the book was by some attributed to Fielding, but Smollett made no further attempt to conceal the authorship, and he at once became famous. He went over to Paris in quest

of new material for caricature, and in 1751, in four duodecimo volumes, appeared *Peregrine Pickle.* Like its predecessor, it is a loosely constructed series of adventures, in which even greater scope is afforded to Smollett's remarkable power of eccentric characterisation. The chief centres of attraction are the grotesque misanthrope of Bath, Cadwallader Crabtree, the burlesque scenes afforded by the physician (a caricature of Akenside) and the painter in Paris, and the so-called "garrison" with its inhabitants, Hatchway and Pipes, and the inimitable Trunnion, the prototype of so many humorous figures, from Uncle Toby to Captain Cuttle.[1]

Smollett's third novel, *Ferdinand Count Fathom,* appeared in 1753, by which time he was settled down at Chelsea, married, and a father. *Fathom* embodies the

[1] Trunnion's ride to church reappears in *John Gilpin;* the misanthrope practising satire under cover of a feigned deafness reappears in the Sir Mungo Malagrowther of Scott, who, indeed, acknowledges further debts to Smollett in the preface to *The Legend of Montrose.* The "garrison" unquestionably suggested to Sterne the "castle" of *Tristram Shandy* and to Dickens the "fortress" of Mr. Wemmick. And indeed it is no exaggeration to say that the tide of subsequent fiction is strewn on every hand with the *disjecta membra* of Smollett's farcical inventions.

The elegy in imitation of Tibullus written in 1747, and printed in the 51st chapter of *Random,* is interesting in view of the elegiac movement commencing with Gray's *Elegy* of 1749-51:

> Let happy lovers fly where pleasures call,
> With festive songs beguile the fleeting hour;
> Lead beauty through the mazes of the ball,
> Or press her wanton in Love's roseate bower:
>
> For me no more I'll range the empurpled mead,
> Where shepherds pipe, and virgins dance around;
> Nor wander thro' the woodbine's fragrant shade,
> To hear the music of the grove resound.

much-too-protracted history of a swindler; but, as Hazlitt says, there is more power of writing occasionally shown in it than in any of Smollett's works. Hazlitt instances the fine and bitter irony of the Count's address to the country of his ancestors on landing in England, the robber scene in the forest, and the sketch of the Parisian swindler who personates a raw English country squire ("Western is tame in comparison"). Few novels have been more imitated, for *Fathom* was the studio model of all the mystery and terror school of fiction, commencing with Mrs. Radcliffe. In spite of these successes, the novelist, owing mainly to a profuse hospitality, was never out of pecuniary straits. From 1756 he conducted *The Critical Review,* set up in opposition to *The Monthly Review* of Griffiths. During 1756-7 he issued the hastily compiled volumes of his *History of England;* in 1757 was produced at Drury Lane his patriotic piece, *The Reprisal, or The Tars of Old England.* In 1755 he had published a translation of *Don Quixote;* and in 1760 he issued serially his imitation of

> I'll seek some lonely church, or dreary hall,
> Where fancy paints the glimm'ring taper blue,
> Where damps hang mould'ring on the ivied wall,
> And sheeted ghosts drink up the midnight dew.
>
> There leagued with hopeless anguish and despair,
> Awhile in silence o'er my fate repine:
> Then with a long farewell to love and care,
> To kindred dust my weary limbs consign.

The author of this, the unfortunate Melopoyn, a poet of the Marshalsea, is forced by hunger to descend to prose, and to subsist on apparitions, monsters, rapes, and murders. The prototype of Borrow's Man in Black is also to be found in *Random,* which is full of hints afterwards utilised by Dickens, an early devourer of Smollett's fiction. For the quality of the *Travels,* see *Cornhill,* August, 1901, and Introduction to Constable's *Smollett,* vols. xi. and xii.

that masterpiece entitled *Launcelot Greaves,* remarkable chiefly for the vivid opening chapter and the fact that it was the first novel to run through the parts of a magazine. In 1762, as a champion of Bute's unpopular Ministry, he undertook the editorship of *The Briton,* which elicited the scurrilous issue called *The North Briton,* run by John Wilkes, with the aid of Smollett's enemy, Charles Churchill. His health broke down under these and other gigantic tasks of compilation, translation, and abridgment, upon which was superadded grief at the death of his daughter Elizabeth, his "little Bet," at the age of fifteen. The greater part of the next two years, 1763-5, he spent in the south of France and in Italy, chiefly at Nice. In 1766 he published his *Travels through France and Italy.* Travelling seems to have put him in a specially bad humour, and he took a jaundiced view of much that he saw abroad. But no book of Smollett's shows an intellect more alert or a power of observation more acute than his travelling diary. A peevish humour (due in large measure to ill health) frequently animates his notes; but they are put together with much literary skill, and there seems no doubt that, as regards accuracy in matters of detail, they attain a very high level. On returning to England, Smollett revisited Scotland, and then proceeded to Bath, where, as a sequel to a reperusal of Anstey's *New Bath Guide,* he conceived the framework of his last great novel.

Smollett's first production upon his return to London in 1768 was his ferocious satire on the English political system, entitled *The History and Adventures of an Atom,* published early in 1769. The temper of this satire is borrowed mainly from *Gulliver,* with aid, as to local colour and nomenclature, from the Jesuit and other accounts of Japan which he had come across during the compilation of his voyages and travels. After its publication

Smollett's health seriously relapsed, and in December, 1769 (a consulate on the Mediterranean having been refused him), he left England for good, and settled first at Pisa, and then near Antignano, a few miles out of Leghorn. There, during the autumn of 1770, he penned his immortal *Humphry Clinker,* a rare example of late maturity of literary power and fecundity of humour. The sardonic humour, persistent curiosity, and faculty of observation shown in the *Travels* are here combined with the mellow contentment of the voyager who has forgotten the small worries of transport, and with the enthusiasm of the veteran who revisits the scenes of his youth. The character-drawing, too, though still caustic, has been mellowed greatly in the lapse of twenty years. Humphry Clinker himself is exquisite, and his sweetheart, Winifred Jenkins (the progenitress of Mrs. Malaprop), not far behind him. Matthew Bramble, irritable but good-hearted (in whom Smollett adumbrates his own wintry temperament), is excellently supported, and seems to have been the prototype of Sir Anthony Absolute in *The Rivals.* But the pedant Lismahago is "the flower of the flock." His tenaciousness in argument is not so delightful as the relaxation of his logical severity when he finds his fortune mellowing in the wintry smiles of Mrs. Tabitha Bramble. This last is the best-preserved and most severe of all Smollett's characters.

Smollett died at Leghorn on September 17th, 1771, and was buried in the English cemetery of that place. Beneath his rugged exterior and his sardonic moodiness there was a fund of generous and even romantic feeling. He was probably a better man than either Fielding or Richardson, but his career is less "sympathetic." In his youth there was too strong a vein of arrogance and pride, and as he grew old he got querulous through overwork.

Humphry Clinker, the "most pleasant gossiping novel

that ever was written," is a delightful travelling companion, but it does not possess the vigour of *Roderick Random,* which contains some vignettes in prose of the highest literary quality. Thus the story of Miss Williams, the episode of Random's sojourn in the Marshalsea and his relations with Jackson and Melopoyn, or of his service in the royal regiment of Picardie, or of his travelling companionship with the Capuchin friar, of whom he always kept to the windward—all these contain masterly strokes of delineation and hints for development in fictitious narrative which have been made the most of by Marryat, Surtees, Dickens, Borrow, and a host of other novelists. Of the coarse savagery, rude generosity, and brutal use of authority habitual in the British navy of his time Smollett gives a unique and perfectly invaluable picture.[1]

The style of *Roderick Random* is more easy and flowing than that of *Tom Jones,* the humour broader and as effectual, the incident even more lively. What then gives the superiority to Fielding? The answer is thus given by Hazlitt: "It is the superior insight into the springs of human character and the constant development of that character through every change of circumstance. Smollett's humour often arises from the situation of the persons, or the peculiarity of their external appearance, as from Roderick Random's carroty locks which hung down over his shoulders like a pound of candles, or Strap's ignorance of London, and the blunders that arise from it. . . . He exhibits the ridiculous accidents and reverses to which human life is liable, not the stuff of which it is

[1] The view that his sketches of Bowling, Trunnion, Morgan, Pipes, Crampley, Oakum, Hatchway, and Whiffle were mere caricatures is no longer tenable. See an interesting article on "Smollett and the Old Sea Dogs," *Blackwood,* August, 1898. See also Chambers's *Tobias Smollett* and the memoir (by Thomas Seccombe) in *Dict. Nat. Biog.* An edition of the *Travels* by the same writer is in preparation.

composed. We read *Roderick Random* as an entertaining story, for the particular accidents and modes of life which it describes have ceased to exist, but we regard *Tom Jones* as a real history, because the author never stops short of those essential principles which lie at the bottom of all our actions, and in which we feel an immediate interest, *intus et in cute.*" Smollett surpassed Fielding, first, as a powerful occasional master of pathos—as in the death of Commodore Trunnion, where, amid some exaggeration, there is a thoroughly genuine pathetic force—and, secondly, in his employment of natural description as a background, as in *Count Fathom,* where the picture of the storm coming on at night in the depths of the forest, and of the terror that constrains Fathom to leave the high road, reveals the latent imaginative power that was in the author. But between Smollett and Fielding there are perhaps really more points of resemblance than contrast. Both are vigorous painters of real life, and both increased the resources of their art. Their broad, effective touches are in strong contrast alike with Defoe's austere realism of incident and with Richardson's minute realism of character.

Laurence Sterne, born at Clonmel on November 24th, 1713, was the son of Roger Sterne, "a poor devil of a lieutenant in a marching regiment." His father was of Yorkshire, his mother of humble Irish origin. The father died on foreign service in 1731, but Laurence preserved a lively remembrance of a character which, as subsequently idealised by him (in Uncle Toby), lives with Falstaff and Mr. Micawber in the Elysium of fiction. In 1733 Sterne went as sizar to Jesus College, Cambridge, where he met, in 1735, that gay-spirited youth, some five years his junior, John Hall Stevenson. Stevenson may, in fact, be termed his college tutor, the lessons that he imparted giving a bent to all Sterne's subsequent life. Having been ordained and inducted (through the kind offices of his

uncle Jacques, a prominent Whig cleric at York) into the living of Sutton near York, he settled down there, "painting, fiddling, and shooting," and often running into York, where he held two prebends. A parson more concerned to make his profession pay him and amuse him, and less interested in its spiritual or evangelical side, it would be difficult to find even at the present day. On Easter Monday, 1741, he married Elizabeth ("Eliza the first"), the daughter of a Yorkshire parson named Lumley, and four years later was born his daughter and correspondent, Lydia. But Sterne's greatest resource, as middle life began to close in upon him, was the renewal of his intimacy with Hall Stevenson, the Eugenius of *Tristram Shandy*. Hall had been ripened in the interval by foreign travel, by the society of Wilkes and other unholy friars of Medmenham, and by that of the French wits and satirists of the sixteenth century, of whose writings he had accumulated a choice and curious collection at Skelton Hall, nicknamed Crazy Castle. It was in the library of Crazy Castle that, brooding over his Pantagruelian studies, Sterne evolved the Rabelaisian fantasia to which he chose to give the name of *Tristram Shandy*. His neglect, or worse (it was his fate, he complained, always to be miserably in love with some one outside his domestic circle), caused the estrangement and removal of his wife, and, relieved rather than otherwise by this riddance of domestic responsibility, Sterne, aged forty-five, turned for diversion to composition. He was astonished at his own facility, and produced in rapid succession the chapters of the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy*. These were published at York on January 1st, 1760. Two months later Garrick was spreading their fame in London, whither Sterne hurried in March to sip the first honey of popular applause and to widen the range of his flirtations.

It is not in the least extraordinary that the critics should

have been exercised about Sterne's style; there is a strong disturbing element in it, and a peculiar restlessness, which to the older school of writers was fidgeting and exasperating. The author had mastered the lesson of Swift's *Polite Conversation;* he avoided the communisms and vulgarisms of his age as if they had been venomous. Sterne was, in a word, the foremost of the impressionists in English style. By the constant use of gestures and short dialogues, interjections and soliloquies, by his intent analysis of fleeting human moods, he isolated the veriest trifles for the purpose of enshrining them with unaccustomed honours amidst his wonderful gallery of portraits. He carefully sought a pathetic cadence for those exquisite little pieces of prose *genre,* until such episodes or *morceaux* (they can scarcely be called incidents) as "Tristram and the Ass," or "Uncle Toby and the Fly," attain to an unrivalled purity and perfection of style—a style as "unstitched" and conversational as can be, but full of happy terms and glancing expressions, and as rapid and idiomatic as is to be found in our literature. With all Sterne's apparent caprice of manner, there is usually not a touch in any of his pictures that could be spared without marring the effect. It is, says the first of English critics, "the pure essence of English conversational style."

In his intimate manner of thought, as a sentimental deist, as in his style of expression, Sterne is the sport of his emotional impulses; and he falls an easy victim to the rising tide of "sentiment" or "sensibility," of which he was to be an apostle. Marivaux and Richardson are now left far behind; and as the century advances, the claims of sensibility get more and more exacting, until it becomes necessary for the hero continually to be in heroics, and the heroine always palpitating. An emotion comes to be regarded as a thing to be isolated, dandled, and savoured deliberately, almost scientifically. Sterne, with his dem-

onstrations of "moral entomology" and his floods of tears (where a discreet quiver of the eyelid would be ample), thoroughly believed in and recklessly indulged in this inexpensive pastime. Like all exaggerations, it is bad art (and in inferior hands it becomes a source of inexpressible torment to the reader); but we must remember that Sterne used it to conquer a new domain for the novel—almost for literature. His methods have descended to hundreds of imitators, and when by imitators of discretion and genuine talent, such as Saintine, Xavier de Maistre, or Charles Nodier, commonly with success.

Like Richardson's work, *Tristram Shandy*[1] had a better reception in the French capital, where Rousseau had prepared the public taste for it, than in London. Sterne himself went to Paris, like Hume, to "have his renown ratified"; and Garat gives us a brief portrait of the man, "always the same, never influenced by plans, but always carried away by impressions," at the theatre, in the *salon,* and on the Pont Neuf, where he prostrated himself, amid a crowd of admirers, before the statue of Henri IV. Voltaire compared him "à ces petits satires de l'antiquité qui renferment des essences précieuses." Leaving Paris Sterne went south, like "Smelfungus" (as he called Smollett), for his health, and spent two years around Montpellier. His popularity abroad reached its climax, not in *Tristram* (the ninth and last volume of which appeared in 1764), but in his second book, *A Sentimental Journey in France and Italy,* published in two duodecimo volumes in February, 1768. It was designed, he tells us, to make us love the world and our fellow-creatures better than we do; and it contains numerous references to his intrigue

[1] Vols. iii. and iv. of which had appeared in 1761, and vols. v. and vi. in 1762. The Lives of Sterne by Traill and Fitzgerald are supplemented by Dr. Sidney Lee's elaborate memoir in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

with Eliza Draper ("Eliza the second"), the fair Anglo-Italian coquette, whose departure for India in April, 1767, he had bewailed with all the resources of sentimental art. Less than two months after its appearance Sterne died in Bond Street, London (March 18th, 1768).

There are admirers of Sterne in England, as well as in France and Germany, who prefer the *Sentimental Journey* to *Tristram*. It is a record of fresh impressions, conversations, interruptions, and fleeting amours by the greatest master we have of the colloquial *milieu* in English prose, and it exhibits his impressionism at its most sensitive pitch. A lambent satire upon the travellers who went to Italy to verify Latin inscriptions and to publish their results plays over the whole. But there is one capital omission in the *Sentimental Journey*. One misses irremediably the Shandean group of portraits. It is, it seems to us, in the marvellous distinctness with which these creations detach themselves from his too-bespattered and often confused canvas that Sterne's grandeur really lies. Amid affectation, tediousness, leering, and obscenity, we come to passages relating to these remarkable figures, which stand out like *chefs-dœuvre* in a gallery of uninspired replicas and other fifth-rate compositions. The characters of My Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim, of Mr. and Mrs. Shandy, of the Widow Wadman, of Dr. Slop, and even minor persons such as Obadiah and Bridget, are depicted with strokes of a masterly vigour. A few of the canvases of Jan Steen have something of the same power to arrest one by their striking animation and fidelity to the life. As a detached fragment few passages in our literature are worthy to compare with the death of Le Fèvre. The effect is instantaneous. In one moment our sympathy is irresistibly arrested. It is the magic of style. As for Uncle Toby, we feel almost at once the desirability of his friendship; we admire the good old soldier, sympathise with his hobby,

and take the keenest interest in his campaign against the Widow Wadman, unworthy though she be of his affections. "My Uncle Toby," says Hazlitt decisively, "is one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature." "Nothing odd can live," said Johnson, and *Tristram Shandy* is the quintessence of oddity; but it will take a good many centuries to kill Shandy; he will outlast our day.

The books referred to in this and the preceding chapter are "the classics," and the four authors—Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne—may be considered as the founders of the English novel. Apart from the great figure of Swift and his prodigious legacy to readers of all nations, and the epic prose of *Robinson Crusoe,* no literary product of the eighteenth century in Britain has an equal claim to rank as "world literature" with the English novel, as shaped by these four masters. Its great points obtained for it a cosmopolitan influence; the modern student is in little danger of overlooking its bad points, which are upon the surface. There is no denying that the "classic" novel takes an exceedingly low view of human nature; it has not been ill described as attempting to play upon life as upon a fiddle without a bridge, in the deliberate endeavour to get the most depressing tone possible from the instrument. This is the refined view of the roguery and the exuberant horseplay which abounds in the work of Fielding and Smollett. There is certainly not to be found here either the idealism of the Elizabethan dramatists or the benignity of the great nineteenth-century group of English novelists. The prevalent aim is to show us the seamy side of life and to "expose" vice; and there is much of the ironic spirit of *Jonathan Wild* about the endeavour. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, unlike the present day, the philosophers were the optimists, and it was left to the novelists to project the black shadows. Their object seems often to be to show how bad men may

be; and in Fielding and Smollett, at least, there is a refreshing absence of cant. Books which conceal so little are necessarily not fit for the perusal of babes and sucklings. They are eminently the books of men living in the world, thoroughly conversant with its miry ways—the rough-and-tumble of the human comedy—but saved by their manliness and their strong sense of humour from the crude materialism and brutal nihilism of some modern "realists." After all, these four writers in England first thoroughly fertilised the grand field of the modern novel. Richardson obtained the greatest European fame; Sterne exercised the greatest influence upon subsequent English prose. But Fielding and Smollett achieved more in welding the novel as a literary instrument. Fielding was the great pioneer in this work, but Smollett, by his greater modernity, vigour, and directness, exercised a more rapid influence upon posterity.

After the great, in the history of the novel, come the infinitely little. From 1750 onwards the presses of London swarmed with duodecimo fiction, at three shillings a volume. *Pamela* and *Clarissa* opened the flood gates of sentimental love fiction, as Fielding and Smollett opened the flood gates of romantic adventure. From the adventures of bucks and libertines, of parish girls and orphans, the exhausted market was revived by a series of chroniclers of animals, such as lap-dogs, cats, and fleas, and of others still who related the adventures of things inanimate, such as guineas, coats, bank-notes, rupees, and ladies' slippers. The great novelists of the past, such as Cervantes and Le Sage, attracted a fresh army of camp-followers and imitators. The adaptations of the central idea of *Don Quixote* are legion. Two of the best specimens belonging to this period may well be mentioned in this place. The first is *The Female Quixote* (1752) of Charlotte Lennox, a lady highly esteemed by Richardson and by the "Great Cham" him-

self. Johnson thus summarised the scheme of the book in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for March, 1752: "Arabella (the Female Quixote) is the daughter of a statesman, born after his retirement in disgrace, and educated in solitude at his castle in a remote province. The romances which she found in the library after her mother's death were almost the only books she read; from these, therefore, she derived her ideas of life; she believed the business of the world to be love, every incident to be the beginning of an adventure, and every stranger a knight in disguise." The idea, good enough in itself, was worked out in a sadly monotonous manner, and the book is almost forgotten, though Johnson wrote the dedication, Fielding praised, and Mr. Austin Dobson has devoted a "vignette" to it. After a life of scribbling, poor Mrs. Lennox died an almoner of the Literary Fund in 1804.

The second is *The Spiritual Quixote* (1772) of Richard Graves (1715—1804), a prolific novelist and versifier of the Prior Park coterie at Bath. This is a book of greater calibre than the other, having a skilfully devised plot, and containing many amusing incidents narrated in a homely but effective style. The special purpose, for novels even then had a "purpose," was to ridicule the intrusion of the laity into spiritual functions, and to satirise the "enthusiasm" of the Methodists. This enthusiasm had come under Graves's observation in the obnoxious form of a shoemaker, who had started a meetinghouse in his parish within a stone's throw of the rectory.

Another faint satellite of the Quixotic school was the great novelist's sister, Sarah Fielding (1710—1768), who published in 1744 her rambling *Adventures of David Simple.* A more virile and independent novel, begotten to some extent, no doubt, by the suggestive episodes in *Pamela,* is the *John Buncle* (1756) of Thomas Amory (1691—1788), an eccentric recluse of Irish descent, which,

though very little known, has the recommendation of being one of the most singular productions in the language. It is a Unitarian romance by an "English Rabelais." Wisdom and mirth take their turn, body and soul are equally attended to. The hero is a great philosopher, mathematician, anatomist, chemist, philologist, and divine, with a good appetite, the best spirits, and an amorous constitution, who sets out on a series of strange adventures to propagate his philosophy, his divinity, and his species with a charming impartiality, and encounters in the process a succession of accomplished females, adorned with equal wit, beauty, and virtue, who are always ready to discuss all manner of theoretical and practical points with him. Hence a candour greater than the candour of Voltaire's *Candide* and "a modesty equal to that of Colley Cibber."

From this naïve and unclassifiable fantasia, which is an indispensable adjunct of every book-lover's top shelf, we must pass on to several "Robinsonaden," or varieties of the type of *voyages imaginaires,* such as *The Travels and Adventures of William Bingfield, Esquire* (1751), or the better-known *Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins* (1751) by Robert Paltock (1697—1767), an obscure London attorney. With hints from *Gulliver* and the *Lunar Fables* of Cyrano, and Bishop Wilkins, Paltock despatches his hero in search of a wife, through a subterranean cavern beneath the South Pole, into a new world in which his senses are dazzled by the beautiful flying Gouwarkee. Paltock has been highly praised for his imaginative power, and for his creation of a new species of winged beings; but he was far eclipsed, in popularity at any rate, by the creator of that curious little *jeu d'esprit, Baron Munchausen's Narrative of his Marvellous Travels and Campaigns in Russia* (1785). The author of this was a Hanoverian, Rudolf Eric Raspe (1739—1794), who fled to England to escape the police, mastered the language, and threw

off *Baron Munchausen* (1785) in the form of a shilling chap-book—in return, no doubt, for a bookseller's dole in relief of his immediate necessities. It was compiled from odds and ends of his notes and recollections, but it crackles with a dry humour of its own, not unworthy of Lucian, the first master of the *genre*. Imitations have abounded, both in England and abroad, especially in America, and the genuine *Munchausen* has been smothered by successive sequels.

Among the novel-purveyors of the period of Scott's youth must also be recorded Cumberland the dramatist, Holcroft the autobiographer, and Robert Bage (1728—1801), whose novels Scott seems to have read with discrimination, for he pronounces *Hermsprang* and *Barham Downs* to have been the best of them. Both Holcroft and Bage, revolutionaries in politics, were reactionary, not to say tedious, in prose narrative. Hugh Kelly, the dramatist, also appealed to the unsavoury sentiments of his time in a novel called *Memoirs of a Magdalen* (1767); greatly superior both in taste and style was *The Simple Story* (1791) of Mrs. Inchbald. Two years later came a somewhat similar tale of Charlotte Smith called *The Old Manor House,* which was written at Eartham, and is said to have enchanted Cowper during his stay there. Later still we have the *Father and Daughter* (1801) of Mrs. Amelia Opie, a story of domestic tenderness, in which the influence of Sterne is manifest. The chief of Sterne's imitators, however, was of course the lachrymose Henry Mackenzie (1745—1831), for many years Nestor of the Northern Athens, friend of Hume, patron of Burns, and Teutonic pioneer of Sir Walter Scott. Having imitated Addison and Steele in *The Mirror and Lounger,* Mackenzie proceeded in his novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771) to imitate Sterne. Mackenzie was an essayist of some merit, and a credit to literature in Edinburgh society; but his novels do

no more than supply a loose and feeble succession of scenes, designed to awaken the tender or passionate sensibilities. In his last novel, *Julia de Roubigné* (1777), in which he also denounces the slave trade, he essays a tragic plot; but the prettiness he shows in painting refinements of feeling and etiquette is ill suited to the strain of a catastrophe which involves the anguish of passion. Mackenzie lived to the age of eighty-six, much respected as a patriarch of letters in the northern capital.

Another imitator of the accidental rather than the essential qualities of Sterne is Henry Brooke, of all a discursive race (that of novelists) perhaps the most discursive, even in England. An alumnus of Trinity College, Dublin, a prolific poet and tragic writer (author of *Gustavus Vasa* and of *The Earl of Essex* (1749), in which the mouth-filling line, "Who rule o'er freemen should themselves be free," elicited Johnson's parody, "Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat"), Henry Brooke (1703—1783) commenced in 1766 the publication of his remarkable novel, *The Fool of Quality,* which extended to five volumes. The book (the title of which seems to have been suggested by a line in *The Dunciad*) received the imprimatur of John Wesley as of unimpeachable morality, but more than a Wesley's authority is needed to procure it a constant supply of readers. It records the education by an ideal merchant prince of an ideal noble, Henry Moreland, who is a pattern of "natural" education and simple virtue—a pattern too closely followed for a long time to allow the heroes of English novels to be regarded as other than unmitigated bores. But the story proper is overlaid by moral digressions of such interminable length that, despite the great mental qualities of the writer, the book is losing itself in the sands of oblivion. "Artistically it is a chaos, and such unity as it has is due chiefly to the binder."

There are three outstanding pieces of prose fiction which have with more or less logical intent been treated of elsewhere in this work.

Rasselas, Dr. Johnson's story of the meditations of princes and philosophers in the pursuit of the *feu follet* of happiness, is less a novel proper than a rhetorical excursion in imaginative ethics, based mainly, in regard to method, upon the framework of a *voyage imaginaire.* Goldsmith's exquisite idyll of *The Vicar of Wakefield* is certainly the emanation of a genius akin to that which created Sir Roger de Coverley. Goldsmith, however, was extremely little affected by his contemporaries, and so it is hard to assign him a definite position in the succession from Richardson to Jane Austen. On the other hand, the influence of *The Vicar* abroad, in conjunction with Rousseau or not, has been profound and far-reaching. Through Rousseau, Diderot, Marmontel, Bernardin de St. Pierre, Goldoni, it has swayed the writers of the Latin nations; while through Wieland, Hermes, Nicolai, and Sebaldus it has dominated Germany. Goldsmith's direct influence upon Herder and Goethe, and later on Jean Paul, was very great, and has not yet been accurately estimated. As wielded by Richardson, Sterne, and Goldsmith, English romance went forth to conquer the world.

Rasselas and *The Vicar of Wakefield* were both written about the same time that Sterne was creating Walter Shandy and his wife, Uncle Toby, Dr. Slop, and Corporal Trim (1759-62). Fanny Burney's *Evelina* appeared in 1778, when there was a complete dearth of new prose fiction of anything approaching tolerable quality. Lydia Languish may well have been ashamed of the latest productions of the circulating library—for already by 1775 the novel had created the circulating library. But for this dearth, and the mysterious youth and freshness of the fair author, we cannot believe that *Evelina* would have made the sensa-

tion that it did. The style of portraiture is rather that of the Hook, Cockton, Mayhew, and Albert Smith order. The freshness of its impressions, however, is unmistakable. Evelina herself is a modest, intelligent, and good-hearted girl, set to shine among fops and fools, vulgarians and worldlings. The first part is undoubtedly dull, but when the love affair with Lord Orville comes to the surface, the cleverness and charm of the heroine seem to envelop us. "Burney" is in a large measure superseded and surpassed by Jane Austen and Mrs. Gaskell. Fanny's *Diary,* on the other hand, seems to have gained in attractiveness by the lapse of time. After Pepys, it is almost if not quite the most interesting diary that we have.

CHAPTER III

MEMOIRS AND LETTERS—I

"The name of Chesterfield has become a synonym for good breeding and politeness. It is associated in our minds with all that is graceful in manner and cold in heart. The image it calls up is that of a man rather below the middle height, in a court suit and blue riband, with regular features, wearing an habitual expression of gentlemanlike ease. His address is insinuating, his bow perfect, his compliments—irresistible."—A. HAYWARD, *Biographical and Critical Essays.*

"I always frequented the society of my superiors. . . . Dr. Swift and Mr. Pope condescended to admit me into their company, and though they had no titles and I was an earl, I always felt that I was obliged by their politeness, and was favoured by being allowed to converse with them."—LORD CHESTERFIELD.

Lord Chesterfield—Lord Hervey—Lady Mary Montagu—Earl of Waldegravé—Bubb Dodington—*The Grenville Papers.*

THERE are two noble lords among the wits of the eighteenth century, and both of them have suffered rather severely (by what Emerson might have called a law of compensation) from their fellow-wits for their titles and decorations. Titles, it has been truly said, adorn mediocrity, but only embarrass superior minds. Unconsciously, moreover, they excite in the literary critic a kind of posthumous jealousy of the assumed princely revenues of their owners, and a secret resentment against the dandified assumption of superiority on the part of these latter over professional authors. With the lapse of time, however, and by slow gradations, Literature learns to forgive social advantages, and to recognise in the literary tableaux afforded to us by Lord Chesterfield and Lord Orford

(Horace Walpole), respectively of society ideals and society manners in the eighteenth century, two of the most fascinating and most permanent contributions ever made to English letters.

Under the first two Georges, English society became consolidated into what Disraeli, with his accustomed iridescence, described as a Venetian oligarchy. The chronicling of the doings and delineation of the manners of such a society could hardly fail to become an important branch of literature. The letters and memoirs of the eighteenth century are thus among its most characteristic products, and on the whole it is no exaggeration to say that they make up one of the most fascinating chapters in our literary history. Taken together, they give an incomparable picture of the life of the aristocracy or privileged classes in this country from 1715 to 1832. Moreover, they enable us to pierce beyond the external surface, and, by piecing together here a piece and there a piece, to get not only a superficial view of the brilliances and follies, but a shrewd idea also of the byplay and the backstair intrigue, and the secret springs by which so much of this world's stage machinery, whether under a democracy or an aristocracy, is inevitably moved. On the whole, they form a unique tableau or picture of the administrative and leisured classes of a great nation, and the eighteenth century is thus self-portrayed with a vividness and a picturesqueness probably unrivalled save in the parallel picture of French society as depicted in French memoirs from 1640 to 1790.

Before going on to the great memoir-writers of the last three-quarters of the eighteenth century, one must endeavour to give a brief outline of a very important and outstanding figure in English literature, who has been in an especial degree the victim of unfair literary depreciation. The figure in question is that of Lord Chesterfield, a

brilliant acquisition to English letters, to which he added not a little of the grace and polish which Boileau and La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère and St. Simon had given to the literature of France, and one of the greatest masters of English prose style. In Chesterfield we seem to get a glimpse for the first time of the rapier in English prose.

The training that surrounded the young Chesterfield was aristocratic at every point. The son of an earl and the grandson, on his mother's side, of the witty George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, Philip Dormer Stanhope was born in London on September 22nd, 1694, and educated privately and at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he conceived an enthusiasm for the Latin classics, against which he thought it right to be on his guard. He emerged from Cambridge, he once said, a "complete pedant." He became a perfect master of French, and graduated in manners at Antwerp, at the petty court maintained by Marlborough at Antwerp after his fall. At twenty-one Stanhope became a Gentlemen of the Bedchamber and a member of Parliament. He also became a member of that famous oligarchical and gaming stronghold (White's Club), and a familiar figure in the salons of Paris. In 1726 he took his seat in the House of Lords, and two years later became ambassador at The Hague. Walpole's antipathy procured his dismissal. Nevertheless, when the Pelhams came in at the beginning of 1745, Chesterfield was made Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and next year was appointed as one of the two secretaries of state. He was judicious, conciliatory, honest, and patriotic in all his employments; but his sharp tongue and biting wit, which were never fully under control, made him many enemies, and he was a politically disappointed man—one to whom high office came too late. He retired from active political life in 1748, from which date until his death on March 24th, 1773, he lived at Chesterfield House in influence and dig-

nified retirement, spending a great portion of his time in reading and writing.[1] His widow, a natural daughter of George I., to secure whose dowry he had to threaten George II. with litigation, died in 1778.

Apart from his political work—he was an admirable speaker, and one of the best lord lieutenants Ireland ever had—the chief occupation of Chesterfield's life was the education, through the medium of a series of familiar letters, of his illegitimate son Philip (Stanhope). His father wished this son to be as near perfection as possible, and therefore, in addition to providing the most efficient tutors and giving him every advantage that his position could command, from the year 1737, when the boy was only five years old, until 1768, when he died, he showered upon him a series of nearly five hundred letters, many of them of great length—letters of advice and counsel, all breathing the most patient forethought and the most devoted interest in his son's career. Whatever faults Chesterfield had, he was certainly a good father. The letters were not intended for publicity. They were, however, committed to the press by the son's widow (who got £1,500 for them) in 1774. A number of letters in another series which Chesterfield addressed to his godson were first published in 1817. Chesterfield also wrote three or four admirable essays for *Fog's Journal* and *The World,* a few short *Characters* of eminent personages of his own time,[2] and a few speeches and other political pieces.

Son Philip seems to have been a stolid Anglo-Dutch young man. He was by no means deficient in the solid virtues; but he had none of the small change of self-denial to which his father attached so much importance and gave the names of good manners, *les mœurs, minores virtutes,* or finally "the graces." Chesterfield set himself to remedy

[1] Or gardening at his country-house of Babiole, Blackheath.
[2] Published separately by Flexney in 1777.

the defect, and, by dint of constantly dwelling upon the subject in his mind, evolved and embodied in his letters a consistent philosophy of good breeding. The exposition is appropriate in every way to the text, for it is the perfection of tact, neatness, good order, and *savoir faire*. Not the high morality of a St. Paul or a Cato the censor, we may admit; but a high standard of conduct, nevertheless, judged by the actual practice of men of the world, framed in the charming literary and epicurean style of a Horace. His ideal was, he admitted, for his son to combine the good qualities of a French and English gentleman. As a practical ideal this is surely not deficient in elevation. Philip was constitutionally debarred from developing into an exquisite; but he became a well-equipped, sensible, and honest diplomatist, and retained his father's affection until his early death at Avignon in 1768.

Chesterfield was an aristocrat to the backbone, and we must always remember that in these letters he was addressing a member of his own class, a class among which a more or less conspicuous position in the world was regarded as a birthright—a class, too, singularly deficient on that side of things in which Chesterfield himself was most defective—the side of poetry and the higher imagination, the blind side of an opulent, administrative caste. This is seen in his express directions for the suppression of laughter, directions which have always seemed to us the greatest blemish in the philosophy of a fellow-countryman of Falstaff's. But the *Letters* more than merit the innumerable eulogies that have been lavished on them. Croker sums up the book as "a masterpiece of good taste, good writing, and good sense." Voltaire paid its writer the highest compliment perhaps that it was in his power to pay: "*You have never been a charlatan or the dupe of charlatans.*" Sainte-Beuve consecrated a truly splendid

Essay to Chesterfield, in which he says of the *Letters:* "You cannot read a page without finding some happy observation worthy of being remembered."

The real St. Simon of the court of George II., though without St. Simon's sense of proportion as to style or delicacy of perception in regard to measure, was John, Lord Hervey, remorseless Hervey of the "coffin face and painted cheeks." Younger son of John Hervey, first Earl of Bristol, Lord Hervey was born in 1696. Educated at Westminster under the much-celebrated Dr. Friend, he inherited a gift for repartee and a fondness for the manipulation of rhyme from both parents, but especially from his mother. Early in 1720, a handsome youth of twenty-four, he seems to have secretly married "Youth's youngest daughter, sweet Lepell," and earned the resentment of Pope, who had frequently been a visitor at Richmond to pay court, not to the Prince and Princess, but to the lovely Molly Lepell. The charms of the same lady drew some English verses from Voltaire, a eulogium from Chesterfield, and a dedication from Horace Walpole! From this coterie the young couple both derived "advanced" views both in regard to conduct and religion. Hervey became heir to the title in 1725, by the death of Carr Hervey, and in the new reign his advancement was assured; after a spell of foreign travel in the attempt to restore his health (undermined by that "detestable and poisonous plant, tea") he was pensioned and made Vice-Chamberlain with the special object of serving as Walpole's agent about the person of Queen Caroline, whose closest confidences he shared. Walpole also employed his incisive pen to refute the libels of Pulteney and *The Craftsman.* Pulteney's venom in response suggested many of the ugly insinuations which Pope afterwards worked up into his stinging caricatures of Lord Fanny and of Sporus—"Sporus, that mere white curd of ass's milk."

After the Queen's death he was raised to the Cabinet as Lord Privy Seal, but was jerked out of office by the fall of Walpole, much against his own inclinations. Thenceforth he made some telling speeches in opposition until his death at Ickworth on August 9th, 1743. His youngest daughter continued to exhibit down to 1819 those peculiarities which gave rise to Lady Mary W. Montagu's saying that the world consisted of "men, women, and Herveys." His famous *Memoirs of the Reign of George down to the Death of Queen Caroline* were composed during the last fifteen years of his life. They were alluded to by Horace Walpole (who may have seen them) in 1759,[1] but the autograph MS. was not actually printed until 1848, when it appeared (with omissions) under the editorship of J. Wilson Croker. These *Memoirs* give a most wonderfully vivid picture of the court of the second George from the pen of an aulical Bozzy who was always behind the scenes. The chief *dramatis personæ* in the strange comedy which he presents are the King, the Prince, Sir Robert Walpole, Pulteney, Bolingbroke, Wyndham, and Chesterfield. The political scandal of the present day is attributed to a generous emulation among the clubs, but it pales before the cynicism with which Hervey seems to have regarded nearly every one of his colleagues and contemporaries. He sees all their character *en noir*, and depicts them with merciless satire. His portrait of the King (George II.) is one of the grimmest revelations ever made of a royal personage. Bolingbroke, Chesterfield, the Prince (with whom he had quarrelled about a maid of honour)—he hated them all. The elaboration of the sentences and of the antitheses detract somewhat from the truth of the picture, and from the skilful choice of words, for Hervey was a master of the adjective. In studied detraction, however, his *Memoirs* are unrivalled.[2]

[1] *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors.*
[2] *Quarterly Review*, clxiv., 501.

The first half of the eighteenth century boasts a bluestocking whom subsequent ages of the higher education of women have not yet succeeded in surpassing. Quickness of perception, descriptive power, and sardonic judgment, combined to an extent rare either in man or woman, were certainly united in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Born in rooms at Covent Garden on May 26th, 1689, Mary Pierrepont became Lady Mary in the following year, when her father succeeded to the Earldom of Kingston. A natural impulse and the presence of a fine library at Thorseby stimulated her to become a serious student, and she allowed neither a stupid governess nor good looks to divert her from a course of patient self-culture. By the help of an uncommon memory and indefatigable labour she taught herself Latin, and she soon became known among her acquaintance for her love of books and learning. When she was fourteen her scholarly accomplishments attracted the attention of Edward Wortley (afterwards Wortley Montagu), who directed her studies for some years under cover of letters addressed to the young lady by his sister Anne Wortley. This curious relationship gradually ripened into a strangely candid and wide-awake courtship, Lady Mary debating questions of love and marriage with all the sagacious gravity of a correspondent to *The Spectator*. As a child Lady Mary was a toast of the Kit-cat Club, and her lover was a respected member of the inner circle of cultivated Whigs, a friend of Addison and Steele (the second volume of *The Tatler* was dedicated to him), a Parliament man, and safe candidate for a good "place" in a Whig administration. Unfortunately the gentleman had difficulties with Lady Mary's father, now Duke of Kingston, about settlements, and the only solution was found in an elopement (August, 1712). In 1716 Mr. Wortley was appointed ambassador extraordinary to the Porte, and the next year was spent by him, his wife, and son in Tur-

key. His wife's letters from Adrianople and Constantinople are admirable pieces of composition, extraordinarily modern in style, being easy, natural, flowing, and full of agreeable description. In describing, she is careful to avoid exaggeration, and her chief ado is to disabuse the minds of her correspondents of the absurd, or at least antiquated, ideas they had derived of Turkish life (especially with regard to slaves and the seraglio) from Rycaut and other old writers.

In 1718 she returned to England and settled at Twickenham, by the advice of Pope, who made love to her, but was completely nonplussed by her laughing wit and *grande dame* self-assurance. Moreover, she showed a preference for Lord Hervey as a friend. This completed the little poet's discomfiture. Trembling with nervous wrath he set to work upon that structure of libellous detraction which caused both of these supposed enemies so much discomfort in after years. The libels that pursued Lary Mary henceforth were in fact as numerous as they are obscure. Her keen satirical wit naturally made her enemies. She became restless and dissatisfied, embittered above all by the misconduct of her only son.

In 1739 (she then being fifty and her husband sixty-one) she went abroad on a prolonged course of foreign travel. Her letters to her husband imply that they still remained on friendly terms, and she speaks of him to their daughter (Lady Bute) with affection. He did not follow her, but continued to live in solitary retirement at Wharncliffe, where he died, a confirmed miser, in 1761. Her letters are dated successively from Venice, Florence, Rome, Geneva, Avignon, Brescia, Lovere (summer quarters on the Lago d'Iseo), and Padua. Their tone is different from that of her former correspondence, being much more discursive than descriptive. The letters deal largely with family and personal matters, but there is much gossip

about people of quality in England, and some diverting book gossip—mainly about the novels of the day by Henry and "Sally" Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett (*Peregrine Pickle* she especially admired). She relates how she spent her evenings at Lovere teaching three old priests to take a hand at "whist at a penny a corner." A woman of strong, rather unsympathetic understanding, with a decided tendency to satire, she professed a good-natured contempt for the small beer of Madame de Sevigné; nevertheless, as she got older her letters came more and more to resemble this excellent model, and the resemblance is helped by the fact that most of the letters are to her daughter, Lady Bute. Besides the letters she wrote fragments of historical memoirs, a few translations, and a quantity of light verse of mediocre quality.

She returned to England only eight months before her death on August 21st, 1762.[1] Her letters, printed surreptitiously in 1763, were edited by her great-grandson, Lord Wharncliffe, with interesting "Introductory Anecdotes" by her granddaughter in 1837, and with important additions by Moy Thomas in 1861.

Among the minor memoirs of the second and third quarters of this century, before proceeding to our protagonist in memoir literature, the great little Horace, we must just mention (we can do little more) the memoirs of Waldegrave and Bubb Dodington, and the important collection of letters, diaries, and papers known as *The Grenville Papers*. James, second Earl of Waldegrave, a great-grandson of James II., and son of a Catholic who turned Protestant, became a favourite of George II., and was raised to be a lord of the bedchamber and a governor of Prince George, afterwards George III., with whom he

[1] There is a cenotaph to her memory in Lichfield Cathedral, commemorating her efforts in the introduction from the East of inoculation from smallpox.

was not popular. Though "unlovely" emphatically, both in address and appearance, Waldegrave set up as a man of gallantry and pleasure, and a few years before his death from smallpox in 1763 (aged only forty-eight) he married Walpole's niece, the handsomest woman in England. During the "interministerium" before Pitt he was Premier for five days (June 8th—12th, 1757), so that he had a close insight into everything that was going on during the period of which he writes (1754-8). The real interest of his *Memoirs* consists in the carefully weighed characters which he draws of the chief actors, and the strong contrast of these portraits to the sinister silhouettes of the ultra-clever and not too scrupulous Hervey. Thus in his portrait of George II. Waldegrave insists upon, as the two really salient features in the likeness, the king's passion for business and his keen knowledge (surpassing that of any of his ministers) of foreign affairs. Lord Walpole edited his *Memoirs* in one quarto volume (Murray), 1821.

Among the Tapers and Tadpoles of the "broad-bottom administration" we are fortunate in getting a three-quarter length portrait of so interesting and typical a fortune-hunter as George Bubb Dodington, who by a long course of "disagreeable compliances" and grotesque contortions raised himself to £5,000 a year and a peerage as Baron Melcombe. He died at Hammersmith, aged seventy, on July 28th, 1762. In the days of his splendour he sought to become a patron of letters, and was accepted as such by Young, Thomson, and Fielding, but was spurned by Johnson. A diligent student of Tacitus, Bubb compiled a large quantity of political papers and memoranda. He left these to a distant cousin, Henry Penruddocke Wyndham, on condition that those alone should be published which did honour to his memory. Wyndham published the *Diary* in 1784, persuading himself by some judicious soph-

istry that the phrase in the will was no barrier to such a proceeding.

The *Diary* forms the most curious illustration perhaps in existence of the character of the servile place-hunters of the time, with unctuous professions of virtuous sentiment and disgust at venality, which serve only to heighten the effect. It must be said in Bubb's honour that he united with Chesterfield and Walpole in trying to save Byng. His *Diary,* though carelessly compiled, contains some curious historical information, especially as to the Prince and Princess, during the period which it covers, from 1748 to 1760.

The Grenville Papers (ed. W. J. Smith, 4 vols., Murray, 1852) contains the correspondence and papers of two really prominent statesmen, George Grenville and Richard Grenville, Earl Temple (the inspirer of Junius), from the original manuscripts at Stowe. They include "Grenville's Diary," a narrative of his great quarrel with the atrabilious Temple, a long disquisition on the Junius problem, and all kinds of interesting and important personal memoranda, covering roughly the twenty years from 1750 to 1770. They must be distinguished from the *Grenville Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George III.,* another large collection in four volumes of political papers and family memoranda, from original sources, but of much less independent value, covering the period 1782—1810.[1]

[1] The two most complete editions of Chesterfield's *Letters* are those by Lord Mahon, 5 vols., 1845-53 (see *Quarterly Review,* clii.), and J. Bradshaw, 3 vols., 1892. There are innumerable abridgments and selections, a good one in the Camelot Classics. See also Charles Strachey's edition of the *Letters to his Son* (2 vols., 1901), the *Selections* by J. Hain Friswell (Bayard Series, 1870) and Birkbeck Hill (1891), and the Memoirs by Maty, Hayward, Churton Collins, Craig, Lee, and W. Ernst (1893). The sneers aimed at Chesterfield by Mrs. Oliphant, by Charles Dickens, and by Dr. Johnson, who said

of the famous letters that they taught "the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing-master," are only very partially deserved. The real nobility of the man is shown in the story of the burlesque family pedigree which he drew up, commencing "Adam de Stanhope" and "Eve de Stanhope"; or the pendent story of the bequest of two years' wages to his servants, with the remark that he regarded them as "unfortunate friends, my equals by nature and my inferiors only by the difference of our fortunes."

CHAPTER IV

MEMOIRS AND LETTERS—II

"The history of England, throughout a very large segment of the eighteenth century, is simply a synonym for the works of Horace Walpole."—Sir Leslie Stephen.

Horace Walpole—Mrs. Delany—Mrs. Thrale—Fanny Burney—Wraxall—Richard Cumberland—Thomas Creevey.

Horace, christened Horatio, Walpole was the third and youngest son of the great statesman, and was born in Arlington Street on October 15th, 1717. In 1727 he went to Eton, where his father had been the companion of Bolingbroke. At Eton he first met the poet Thomas Gray, with whom, after leaving King's College, Cambridge, in 1739, he set out on a grand tour. One was a student of art and poetry on the way to become a scholar; the other, if a budding virtuoso, yet at the same time a fine gentleman and very fond of company; so that it is scarcely to be wondered at that they did not get on particularly well together.

Walpole was snobbish and insolent to Gray, who was stiff and unconciliatory. The result was that they parted immediately after leaving Florence, where Walpole made the acquaintance of his lifelong correspondent Sir Horace Mann. Fortunately the two schoolfellows were reconciled by 1747, when Gray sent to Walpole those famous lines *On the Death of a Favourite Cat drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes.* On his return Horace was nominated for the Government borough of Callington. He was provided through his father's influence with the sinecures which would then be regarded as the natural perquisites of a

younger son of the prime minister, amounting to a secure income of well over £4,000 a year.

As Chesterfield, with his exasperating serenity, appeared to look upon politics as a game for the gratification of his own keen sense of comedy, so Walpole regarded them, and kept in touch with them, largely as a means of supplying his friends with *nouvelles à la main.*

After his return from abroad and the death of his father his real hobbies were his correspondence, the cottage which he turned into a printing office, the notorious *Officina Arbuteana* or Strawberry Hill Press, and the *à la mode* toy-woman's country maisonette which he aspired to convert into a Gothic castle—a feudal château without and a combination of Hertford House, Soane Museum, and Madame Tussaud's within. This wonderful house "just out of Twickenham," which he first took in May, 1747, and which from being a "rustic" villa built by a retired coachman (hence nicknamed Chopped-Straw Hall) he gradually transformed into a toy castle, as Louis XIV. evolved Versailles from a small hunting-château—this structure became for a long period the central fact of his existence.

Compiler and memoir-writer, builder and planter, virtuoso, the voluminous correspondent of Mann, Mason, the Countess of Ossory, Madame du Deffand and his "amours," his "twin wives," as he called them, the two Miss Berrys, Walpole was surely the busiest man of leisure in or about London. Yet it may be that he was at his happiest and best not as a correspondent but as a raconteur. We have a delightful picture of him in this capacity in the *Walpoliana* issued by John Pinkerton.

Of Walpole's later years, his fortunate friendship with the Miss Berrys and his death at a ripe old age in the appropriate atmosphere of Berkeley Square on March 2nd, 1797, there is little to say. He was a very grudging critic, and as a retribution his own great qualities as a littérateur

have been too long eclipsed by the severely moral estimate of Macaulay.[1] As a matter of fact, when you admit that he was a little dry, a little disdainful, a little difficult; when you add that he was rather selfish and rather mean, at times inclined to be very punctilious and exacting, but mellowing with age and knowledge of the world, and that his delicate frame rendered him irritable, the bad part will have been told; and, frankly, in what one calls the "world," is this a very severe burden with which to load his memory? He is continually actuated by the strongest desire to please, and there is scarcely a dull page in the sixteen volumes of his published correspondence. To stigmatise as affected the coquetry with which such a man endeavours to veil his foibles would be nothing short of gross ingratitude.

Apart from his wonderful correspondence, the best and ripest works of Walpole are those which most nearly approach it in general character: such are his backstairs *Memoirs of the Last Ten Years of the Reign of George II.*, a somewhat acid but most entertaining sketch of the political intrigues of the post-Walpole, post-Hervey epoch, and *Memoirs of the Reign of George III.*, supplemented by a *Journal of the Reign of George III. from 1771 to 1783.* These memoirs were published long after Walpole's death, respectively in 1822, 1845, and 1859. The vitality which Walpole manages to give to the prosaic personages and parliamentary debates of this historical period is truly astonishing. Of his *Castle of Otranto* and his tragedy, *The Mysterious Mother,* it will be necessary to say a word or two elsewhere, though the interest of both has long ceased to be more than merely historical.

[1] Walpole's moral stature is one of the few points upon which Macaulay and Croker seem to have been in substantial agreement: seldom wrong either of them, except in an unduly low estimate of one another.

It is far otherwise with the *Letters*. The gaiety of these, their point, their pungency, their persiflage, their biographical, historic and documentary interest as re-creating for us a complete period of fifty years (1740-90), with a few years over at either end—these qualities are sufficiently familiar to all connoisseurs of literature who are also connoisseurs of life. They may be maliciously and unscrupulously unfair, they make no attempt to teach you or to preach you, to correct you or ennoble you, but they *are* amusing. As Thackeray well says, "Fiddles sing all through them, wax lights, fine dresses, fine jokes, fine plate, fine equipages glitter and sparkle; never was such a brilliant, smirking *Vanity Fair* as that through which he leads us." And they gain enormously from the first-hand air with which he manages to invest all his stories. As stories of the nineteenth century tend to crystallise round the super-eminently picturesque figures of "the Duke," Disraeli, and Sir Walter Scott, so in the eighteenth any personal anecdote gained 20 per cent. in value if it were concerned with Marlborough, Bolingbroke, or Swift. Walpole had sly intimate anecdotes about them all; of Marlborough making wry faces at medicine, for instance, or tying Miss Jennings's garter; and as Hervey in relating some exceptionally tall tale is always ready with "The Queen herself told me"; or Bubb Dodington with "I waited on the Princess, who informed me"; so Walpole is always prepared to invoke "my father" or "my schoolfellow, Lord Bute." "On the death of George I.," he relates, "my father killed two horses in carrying the tidings to his successor." It is true that the credulity of the reader of this Turpinian episode is somewhat strained when he learns that the distance was only from Chelsea to Richmond. "The letters of Lady Wortley Montagu are genuine: I have seen the originals, among which are some far superior to those in print. But some of them were

very immodest. She was a playfellow of mine when both were children, and was always a dirty little thing." The lady was twenty-eight when Horace was born! But how refuse credence to the raconteur who finishes the story thus?—"Pope gave her the Homer he had used in translating. I have got it: it is a small edition by Wetstein. *Here it is.* She wrote that little poem in the blank leaves." Equally amusing are some of the stories about Pitt and Newcastle. Distrust is occasionally aroused as we read the *Letters,* but it is soon swallowed up in delight, and we find ourselves echoing Byron's epithet, "Incomparable, *Incomparable.*"

The records of the slowly widening aristocratic circle of the eighteenth century are carried on by good hands, and many of the threads of Lady Mary, Hervey, and Walpole are picked up and cared for by the most diligent of diarists, Mary Delany. She was born on May 14th, 1700, at Coulston in Wilts (the daughter of Colonel Bernard Granville), and was brought up by her aunt Valeria Lady Stanley, who had been a maid of honour to Queen Mary II. The Delany's recollections went back to Handel, Pope, Bolingbroke, and Swift, with whom she corresponded, and she was a playmate of Prior's "Kitty" and "Peggy" (Margaret Harley, Duchess of Portland). At seventeen she was married to a fat, gouty, snuffy, toping Cornish squire, sixty years old, very jealous, and a strong Jacobite, named Pendarves; a widow at twenty-four, she was surrounded by admirers, among them John Wesley, but in 1731 she went over to Ireland, stayed on St. Stephen's Green, came under the spell of Swift, who "learned her English," and in 1743 married Swift's old friend and future biographer, Dr. Delany. Her letters and diary abound in vivacious details of the social life of the eighteenth century. "Dear, delicious Mrs. Delany," the favourite of all, the most consummate of gossips, the most feminine of diarists, died in

the odour of St. James's on April 15th, 1788. Her correspondence, which takes the form of a journalised tableau of the whole of her long life, was collected and edited by her great-niece Lady Llanover; the selection was made in 1856, the notes verified at the British Museum in 1857, and the whole issued in six bulky volumes with an index in 1861 and 1862.

For a picture of the Beau Monde from the time that "dear Mrs. Delany" left it we can refer the memoir-reader to the congenial pages of Miss Mary Berry, the friend of Horace Walpole, who was born three years after George III.'s accession, and lived to be introduced to Queen Victoria. She edited the letters of Madame du Deffand to Walpole in 1810, wrote a Life of Rachel, Lady Russell, and a rather ambitious *Comparative View of Social Life in England and France from 1660* (1828). Her last effort was even more ambitious: it was to rescue the memory of her old friend, "Horace de Orford," who had always shown her his best side, from the giant grasp of an unfriendly Edinburgh reviewer, one Macaulay. She died in November, 1852, a few months after her younger sister Agnes, and was buried at Petersham. Her journals and correspondence were edited in three large volumes by Lady Theresa Lewis in 1865.

Akin to these, both in age and stratification, are the letters, memorials, and other deposits of a large host of minor diarists, among them Mrs. Thrale, the Twinings, and Mrs. Trench. Mrs. Thrale's *Anecdotes of the late Dr. Johnson,* 1764-84, written in Italy after her marriage to Piozzi, and printed in 1786, can hardly die while curiosity as to Johnson lives, coloured though they are by the desire to defend her own conduct. Melusina Trench, a granddaughter of the Richard Chevenix whom Chesterfield made Bishop of Waterford in spite of the opposition of George II., left behind her some graceful and refined letters and journals,

excerpted for publication as *Remains of Mrs. Richard Trench* in 1862. She and her husband were detained by Napoleon (1803-7), and she gives a very interesting account of personalities in Paris, also of Nelson and Lady Hamilton. A good judge, Edward FitzGerald, greatly admired her letters for their "natural taste and good breeding." "One is sorry for the account of Lord Nelson, but we cannot doubt it." *The Twining Letters,* first published in 1882, are remarkable chiefly for the excellent critical taste, prevision, and discernment which they display. They were written by a scholarly clergyman, Thomas Twining, who died at Colchester in 1804, and are mainly concerned with the 'eighties of the eighteenth century.

The reach of Horace Walpole as a memoirist is equalled, if it be not surpassed, by that of Fanny Burney, whose diary extends for a good diamond jubilee of years since, a girl of seventeen, she first began in 1768-9 to scribble the impressions of the celebrities who thronged her father's house in Leicester Square. At twenty-six she brought out her first novel, *Evelina* (1778), the first great popular success since Sterne.[1] "Fannikin" herself now became a celebrity, and began to keep a diary on a large scale. The interest of this work is largely concentrated on the delightful picture which the little Burney gives of the softer side of "Ursa Major" (Dr. Johnson), to whom she was introduced in August, 1778, at the Streatham house of Mrs. Thrale, a lady twelve years her senior, for

[1] Macaulay, with a charming old-fashioned gallantry to the fair sex, was indignant to the point of ferocity with Croker for his insinuation (not *entirely* without ground) that the extraordinary success of *Evelina* was due in large measure to the "strange misrepresentation" that the author was ten years younger than she really was. But the peculiar feature about our prudish little Fanny was that she never really grew up at all!

whom her enthusiasm was great. They had a common ground of self-admiration. No lady author has ever, perhaps, been in greater danger of being spoiled by flattery than was Fanny Burney. At their third meeting Johnson felt himself in such spirits that he kissed her hand and called her a tartar, a toad, and a sly rogue. Her account of Johnson's last illness and of how she waited on his staircase for hours on the remote chance of being admitted to his bedside, is among the most touching and unaffected passages in this kind of writing anywhere to be found. After losing Dr. Johnson, who was to some extent her sponsor in the literary world, Fanny Burney acquired the friendship of "dear Mrs. Delany," whose continuator she was in a special sense to become. George III. and Queen Charlotte were frequent visitors at Mrs. Delany's house in Windsor, and nothing could well exceed the vivacity of Fanny's description of her first introduction to these august personages. In June, 1786, the Queen offered her a post as second keeper of the robes (£200 a year) under a rough-tongued and irascible Frau Schwellenberg—a post for which there were multitudes of eager aristocratic competitors. A stranger in aristocratic circles, and quite unhabituated to the flunkeyism propagated by a court, the little Burney was ill-advised enough (mainly by her father) to accept. It was going from the parlour to the schoolroom, or, perhaps more exactly, the servants' hall. After the flattery and incense that had surrounded the creator of Evelina and Cecilia, it was a painful contrast indeed. But the extent of posterity's loss in consequence of her being immured at Windsor has been exaggerated. Her best work in fiction was already done. Moreover, we gain in her diary an incomparable picture of the semi-monastic ritual and prison discipline to which she was subjected, also of Warren Hastings's trial and of the King's illness

in 1789. It is a significant fact that after she leaves the court her diary[1] falls off in interest.

An amusing continuator of the historical memoirs of Hervey and Walpole may be found in Sir Nathaniel William Wraxall (1751—1831), a political underling, who had been in India, travelled a good deal in Germany, Northern Europe, and Italy on semi-political missions, wrote with a very facile pen, and sat in Parliament from 1780 to 1794. He was a great busybody, pushed himself in everywhere, and had a passion for notoriety equal to that of Boswell. When his *Historical Memoirs* appeared in 1815, Croker was at great pains to slash its inaccuracies in the pages of *The Quarterly,* and stepped out of the arena looking about him for congratulations with the air of a man conscious of having done a service to society, as if he had killed a mad dog. *The Edinburgh* and *The British Critic* followed suit. It is true that Wraxall had made some unjustifiable insinuations, and, with the true spirit of the incorrigible busybody and gossip, he seemed more amused than anything else at the mischief he had done (like a monkey grinning and chattering over the havoc which he has been committing in a china closet), though he had to pay £500 for a libel against Count Woronzow. Wraxall's descriptions of George III., Lord North, and the Gordon riots of 1780 are all most vivid, and the fine line which divides his inaccuracies from those of the other memoir-writers, though it may have been plain to Croker, is much less perceptible at the present day. Similar faults were found with the *Posthumous Memoirs,* which came out in

[1] The *Diary and Letters* were issued in seven volumes, 1842-6, and a prelude in the shape of an Early Diary (1768-78), ed. Annie Raine Ellis, in 1890; a new edition by Dodson with fine plates, 1905. A serviceable abridgment of the *Diary* into three compact volumes was issued by Vizetelly & Co. (ed. W. C. Ward) in 1890, prefaced by Macaulay's *Essay* on Madame D'Arblay.

1836, five years after the author's death; but the faults, if proved, have not impaired the popularity of these fluent and entertaining volumes. Wraxall was, to some extent, the chartered buffoon of the higher political circles, round the periphery of which he had managed to scramble. George Selwyn spoke of him as "that rascal," and the *Rolliad* wits named him "the travelling tutor to the House of Commons." Yet as a gossip he derived certain advantages from these defects, and it is doubtful whether too much has not been made of Macaulay's gibes about the "Mendacium Wraxallianum."

Of the minor literary memoir-writers of the century represented by Mrs. Pilkington, Richard Glover, and William Hayley, the most interesting perhaps was Richard Cumberland (1732—1811), great-grandson of the learned Richard Cumberland, Bishop of Peterborough, author of of *De legibus Naturæ* (1672), and one of the pioneers of utilitarianism in ethics. In letters Cumberland was emphatically an amateur—thin-skinned, jealous, abnormally whimsical, and conceited. He declined to laugh at *The School for Scandal,* which Sheridan said was unfair, for he had laughed heartily at "Cumby's" tragedy; and he was famously caricatured as Sir Fretful Plagiary in *The Critic.* His novels, *Arundel* (1789) and *Henry* (1795), nominally in imitation of Fielding, are quite deservedly forgotten. His successful comedies, *The Brothers* (1769) and *The West Indian,* owed most of their success to Garrick. His abilities were good, but were immensely overrated by himself—perhaps also by one or two friends, Garrick and Goldsmith among them. Vague, casual and egotistical as they are, Cumberland's *Memoirs,* published in two volumes in 1807, form his best title to remembrance. In these he tells us all about his political disappointments, and gives us a few disjointed and ill-remembered, yet fascinating, glimpses of the eminent men he had mixed with

as a boy at Bentley's Lodge at Cambridge, and later at the British Coffee-house and the Literary Club. His *Anecdoles of Eminent Painters in Spain* (2 vols., 1782) deserves remembrance as the first English book to call attention to the glories of the Spanish school. In all his writing he is much addicted to verbiage, and he was best, in all probability, like Walpole, as a raconteur.

Among minor autobiographies, if only on account of its curiosity, a short space may be spared for the *Memoirs* issued in 1764, and attributed to George Psalmanazar, one of the most extraordinary of literary adventurers, charlatans, or cheats even in the century of Casanova, Cagliostro, and Barry Lyndon. Reputed a Gascon by origin, Psalmanazar is first heard of in the Rhine country in the reign of our William III., when, as one of the many subterfuges of a professional beggar, he hit on the idea of posing as a Japanese. Never having been east of Rome or Frankfurt he had to invent his "native" speech, diet, religion, and manners to suit the credulity of his clients. At one time he was a waiter in a coffee-house and at another was reduced to take service in a regiment employed by the Elector of Cologne. Finally his religion and philology began to attract a little notice even among persons of quality. The English garrison in the Low Countries during 1702 interested themselves in him. An army chaplain, who had an axe of his own to grind, transmuted him into a Formosan, baptised him, and forwarded his story greatly embellished to Dr. Compton, Bishop of London. Abuse of Jesuits at that time covered a host of infirmities, and in 1703 Psalmanazar landed at Harwich as an interesting victim of Jesuit malice in the Far East. He promptly drew up a Formosan catechism, made a butt of Dr. Burnett, and deceived the rest of the bishops with a running rein. He chattered gibberish with assurance, met rich patrons affably, and was sent at their expense to Oxford, where it was hoped that he might read Formosan with aspiring Orientalists. He even bragged of his cannabalistic feats, though he conceded that the man-eating habit was "a little unmannerly." Three years elapsed before he was found out and relegated to Grub Street, where Smollett, who knew those purlieus better than any other man, tells us that after fifty years' drudgery he was just paid enough by the booksellers

to keep him off the parish. In a tavern in Old Street, Dr. Johnson sought him out and found in him qualities which led him to venerate the aged Psalmanazar as a saint. So greatly did Johnson venerate that he never contradicted him, and so delicately did he regard his feelings that he would not so much as mention China to him. The poor old Formosan died at Clerkenwell, very penitent for his imposture, in May, 1763. (For the best account see Birkbeck Hill's *Roswell*, vol. iii. App. A.)

As a supplement to the gossipy, historical memoirs of Walpole and Wraxall, it might not be amiss to include in this place the recently selected *Creevey Papers*. Thomas Creevey (1768—1838), son of a Liverpool merchant, a man without birth or wealth or station, was called to the Bar, held one of the Norfolk pocket boroughs, and fluttered about among the left of the Radical opposition during the forty years or more of its starved and parched opposition to Pitt and his successors. Possessing nothing but his clothes, this pliant and accommodating Creevey mounted easily into the highest circles of the monde of that day, speaking his little mind without fear and restraint—a pure partisan, the frank mouthpiece of a faction, the secret counsels and calculations of which are seen often here in their most odious form. To Tom Creevey such men as Canning, Eldon, and Wellington were the greatest wretches unhung. A recipient of almost endless Whig hospitality down to 1832, when he set up a roof-tree of his own on the strength of a sinecure from the Reform Government, "Old Creevey," who had become a regular "Old Wigsby" to his friends, died in some obscurity in January, 1838. His papers, correspondence, and diaries were bought originally from the cheerful old reprobate's mistress and published first in 1903—a new one-volume edition with a greatly improved memoir in 1905. As a picture of politics and society from 1800 to 1838, in the days when all men had nicknames, such as Punch Greville, Poodle Byng, Bobus Smith, and Cheerful Charlie, and revealed their motives and designs with an almost Pepysian frankness and smiling, unashamed loquacity, *The Creevey Papers* come very nearly, if not quite, up to the eighteenth-century standard, preparing the way for the great nineteenth-century diarists, Greville and Grant Duff.

CHAPTER V

THE HISTORIANS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

"Succeeding scholars have read his history and pronounced it good. It is likewise finished."—BIRRELL, *Res Judicatæ.*

"'I have always (wrote Gibbon) valued far above the external gifts of rank and fortune, two qualities for which I stand indebted to the indulgence of Nature, a strong and constant passion for Letters, and a propensity to view and enjoy every object in the most favourable light.' Could the art of happiness be condensed into fewer words?"—PAUL, *Men and Letters.*

Gibbon—Hume—Robertson—Hearne—Minor historians—Blackstone.

THE *Study and Use of History* was triumphantly vindicated by Lord Bolingbroke in his famous *Letters* on that subject dating from 1735, in which he claimed (after Diogenes Laertius) that History was Philosophy teaching by examples. Bolingbroke exhibited the same contempt for historical archivists and researches that Pope showed towards poetical commentators and critics, but he was earnest in his desire to show the practical utility of a knowledge of modern history, and the excellent ethical influence of a study which emancipates the mind from narrowing influences and ennobles it by a wide understanding of mankind. Nevertheless, it was not until a quarter-century had passed and Clarendon and Burnet had become old masters that a really great school of modern English historians sprang up with the triumvirate represented by Gibbon, Hume, and Robertson.

The greatest of all our historians, Edward Gibbon, was born at Putney on April 27th, 1737, being the great-grandson of a Leadenhall Street linendraper, whose son made a large fortune by speculation in the reign of George I. His father was a member of White's Club, "who silently precipitated large sums of money into the bottomless pit" which that institution provided for the chastening of spendthrifts. From nine to eleven he was at the ancient classical school at Kingston-on-Thames, where, "at the expense of many tears and some blood," he purchased a knowledge of Latin syntax. His natural bent as a child was apparently to mathematical studies. Between 1749 and 1750, "though still interrupted by danger and debility," he painfully climbed into the third form at Westminster School. He agrees with Cowper in describing the school of his day as "a cavern of fear and sorrow." Leaving Westminster in 1750, he spent some three years in desultory reading, arriving at Oxford "with a stock of erudition that might have puzzled a doctor, and a degree of ignorance of which a schoolboy would have been ashamed." "The dynasties of Egypt and Assyria," he explains, had been his top and cricket ball. He spent fourteen months at Magdalen College, Oxford, months "the most idle and unprofitable in my whole life."

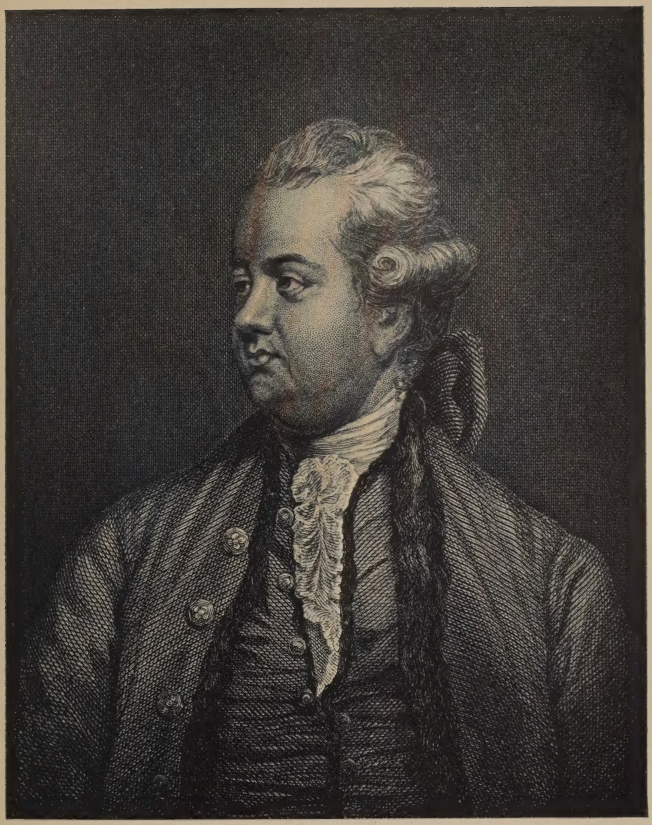
Gibbon devoted a large portion of his time to rambling through the mazes of theological controversy. The perusal of Bossuet's *Catholic Doctrine and Protestant Variations* achieved his conversion to Popery. The consequence of this conversion, which he reported in a pompously self-important letter to his father, was his removal from Oxford and his banishment to Lausanne (1753). A meagre table, a narrow allowance, the deprivation of a man-servant, and an open fire had their due influence with the ex-fellow-commoner of Magdalen. He was soon reading Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales* in place of Bossuet; both

writers contributed in an important measure to the formation of his prose style.

Gibbon was lucky in the Protestant pastor to whom the charge of his studies was entrusted. M. Pavilliard was one of those austere Huguenot ministers of broad views and the coral-insect kind of industry of whom the early eighteenth century saw so many examples. Himself a born student, Gibbon soon adapted himself to the methodical ways of his tutor. "Such as I am," he says, "in genius, in learning, or in manners, I owe my creation to Lausanne. It was in that school that the statue was discovered in the block of marble; and my own religious folly and my father's blind resolution produced the effects of the most deliberate wisdom." From this time he began habitually to speak French. Luard informs us that he spoke with a marvellous correctness, though his pronunciation was affected; he talked in a falsetto tone, and always "like a book." It was Sainte-Beuve's opinion that his English idiom suffered somewhat from his early familiarity with French. In 1758 he returned to England, and composed in French a somewhat stiff and formal *Essai sur l'Étude de la Littérature.*

His complete Frenchification was prevented by an accidental circumstance—the embodiment of the Southhampton Militia. Gibbon and his father were committed to take up commands without realising very precisely what their obligations would be. The result was that for three years (1759-62) Gibbon led the life of an officer in a marching regiment. He was captain of the grenadier company, a post in which one is constrained to reflect that he must have cut a droll figure. At any rate, he put aside learning[1] and mingled with his fellow-countrymen. "With my foreign education and reserved temper," he says, "I might have remained a stranger in my own country"; as it was,

[1] His reading while he was in the militia was confined mainly to Homer, Polybius, Cæsar, Arrian, and Strabo.



FROM THE PAINTING BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

EDWARD GIBBON

he was "proud" to be "an Englishmanan and a soldier." He had earned, he tells us, the right to talk about the Roman legions, and when he returned to Lausanne he astonished his sedate friends. After the militia was disbanded, at the close of 1762, he started for the Continent, staying some months at Paris, and at Lausanne, and proceeding to Florence, Rome, and Naples. He prepared himself for these visits by a systematic course of topographical study. "It was at Rome," he writes, in an ever-memorable passage, "on the 15th October, 1766, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the bare-footed friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind."

Nine or ten years elapsed before the idea was definitely adopted, the important event of this period being the formation of Gibbon's library. He had taken charge of his father's books upon his return to England in April, 1758, and the purchase for twenty guineas of the *Memoirs of the Society of Inscriptions of Paris* marks an important epoch. It was to form the nucleus of the instrument of his life's work—his select library. Within its walls he continued all his life to make learned discoveries, and laid the foundations of knowledge upon what he calls "a modest and learned ignorance." The conception and the plan alone of such a work as *The Decline and Fall* is wonderful. The daring occupation of a summit from which Christianity, Mohammedanism, Roman law, the irruptions of the different hordes of barbarians, and the politics of the Persian Empire might all be regarded as parts of one whole, is in itself a marvellous feat of that high form of imagination which is indispensable to historians and authors of scientific discoveries as much as to poets and painters. Gibbon's *History* is a kind of historical Mount Everest; it is interesting, however, to observe the lesser

peaks which Gibbon scanned and thought of scaling before he resolved to risk the greater ascent. The first subject that attracted him was the expedition of Charles VIII. into Italy, and for this he read Comines, and wrote some preliminary dissertations. Successive ideas were the Third Crusade, the Barons' War, the Black Prince, and Sir Walter Raleigh. The last subject was long dallied with before he came to the conclusion that he must seek a theme at once safer and more extensive.

Gibbon's first English publication was *Critical Observations on the Sixth Book of the Æneid* (1770), an anonymous attack upon the "Eleusinian theory" of Warburton. His thoughts now at length became fixed upon Latin literature, and from Tacitus, Pliny, and Juvenal he "plunged into the ocean of Augustan history," and investigated with pen almost always in hand the original records, both Greek and Latin, from Dion Cassius to Ammianus Marcellinus. "The subsidiary rays of medals and inscriptions of geography and chronology were thrown on their proper objects, and I applied the collections of Tillemont—inimitable accuracy almost assumes the character of genius—to fix and arrange within my reach the loose and scattered atoms of historical information." These preliminary studies were interrupted by the illness and death of his father in November, 1770, and it was not until the end of 1772 that he was able to disentangle the estate.

Gibbon now settled in London, aged thirty-five, independent, and free to concentrate his accumulated knowledge and his consummate literary judgment upon the great work of his life. His wit caused him to be courted. Nervous as he was of being left alone with Johnson, he joined the Club in 1774; he also was seen at Boodle's, and obtained a pocket borough, through the interest of a cousin, at Liskeard; but he was merely a vote, not a voice, in the House of Commons, which he frequented chiefly in order

to obtain passport to a good sinecure (duly obtained in 1779, salary £750). In 1776 was published the first volume of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* which met with general applause. He was specially gratified by the praise of Hume and Robertson, who seemed to offer him a place which he would never "presume" to claim, as one of the triumvirate of British historians. Vols ii. and iii. appeared in 1781. Two years later he removed to Lausanne to finish his history undisturbed and at leisure, and the three remaining volumes were the work of just under four years. "It was on the day, or rather night, of June 27th, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen I took several turns in a *berceau* or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame; but my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken my everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future fate of my *History,* the life of the historian must be short and precarious." Few passages in English prose are more justly celebrated than this, which exhibits alike the enthusiasm of literary inspiration and the sobering pathos of human achievement. Gibbon planned some further historical works, but executed none. In the summer of 1793 he returned to England to be with his friend, Lord Sheffield. His career was drawing to a close. "Earthly dignity has its limits, even in an historian." Symptoms of dropsy began to appear, and he died at Sheffield Place, on the

road between East Grinstead and Lewes, on January 16th, 1794. His portrait by Sir Joshua is at Sheffield Place, and his remains in the Sheffield mausoleum in the neighbouring church of Fletching.[1]

At various periods of his life, probably between 1788 and 1793, he had been occupied with the composition of an account of his own life and writings. He had written out a large portion of this autobiography no less than seven times, approaching the subject-matter each time from a slightly different point of view; and there is little doubt that he intended at some time to combine the different versions into one connected whole. His sudden death threw this task upon Lord Sheffield and his daughter, Marie Josepha Holroyd, who performed their task with diligence and care. At the same time they cut out a good many passages where Gibbon's candour got the better of his sense of decorum, thus stultifying the comic flourish about "Truth, naked, unblushing Truth," with which the *Memoirs,* as published in 1796, are prefaced. Gibbon's *Memoirs* are a valuable addition to our literature, which is not rich in autobiographical works of the kind. The Lives of Lord Herbert, Evelyn, and Clarendon hardly come into the same category; those of Holcroft and Gifford, Hume, Horner, and Mackintosh, though all interesting in their way, are not comparable in importance. The *Apologia* of Newman and the *Memoirs* of Mark Pattison are nearer to the work of Gibbon in their endeavour to depict the influences combining to produce "life-work." The nearest approach to it, however, by far, is the wonderful *Autobiography* of Herbert Spencer, between whose philosophic self-complacency and self-centred foibles and

[1] Gibbon had always been strangely indifferent to his own health and despised such alteratives as fresh air and exercise. At Sheffield Place they once removed his hat for over a week: he never missed it.

those of the great historian a remarkable affinity may be discerned.

Defects inseparable from a certain lack of imagination and from an extravagant cult of self are inherent both in the man and in his literary manner. Gibbon's style, in short, like himself, was pompous, formal, and obese, haunted by a species of old-fashioned academic verbosity and an inveterate tendency to grandiloquent periphrasis. The regularity of the cadence becomes singularly monotonous. Few styles lend themselves more easily to parody; it has, indeed, often been parodied, and many of the parodies are excellent. Yet the style of Gibbon, with certain obvious faults, was marvellously adapted to the historian's faculties and to the special effects which he sought to produce. For the purpose of antithesis, for the constant balancing of considerations, for the critical reservations so necessary to the historiographer and archæologist, and for the cynical innuendoes which are the salt of the *History,* the style of Gibbon is unsurpassed; and as the reader progresses with the work, he is more and more impressed by the long roll of the sentences, in which the conclusions of learning are enforced with all the arts of oratorical declamation. It may be that Gibbon sometimes draws out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument; but the rapidity of treatment increases very markedly as the work progresses. Thus, no less than one-half of the history is concerned with the events of 378 years, while those of 977 years are compressed into the remaining half.

The pre-eminent greatness of Gibbon's *History* is due, in the main, to three distinct causes. In the first place, to his conception of history as a spacious panorama in which a series of tableaux are made to pass before the reader's eye. In spite of theorists, Gibbon's conception remains, and will remain, in agreement with that of the vast mass of mankind. The success of *The Decline and*

Fall is due, in the second place, to its erudition; it is one of the few great books to retain a literary reputation upon such a footing. And Gibbon retained to the last his general attitude of scepticism—the *third* great bulwark of the undying fame of his work. He was a much more profound sceptic than Voltaire, who was rather like Isaac Vossius in that you might easily persuade him of even an improbable thing, if only it were not in the Bible.[1] The distrust of zeal, the conviction that enthusiasm is inconsistent with intellectual balance, was ingrained in Gibbon's mental constitution, and as time went on it was confirmed by study and experience. His cynicism supplied the antipathy which he infused when he mixed his most effective colours; and with this cynicism went an invaluable placidity of temperament. This cynical placidity was the historian's safeguard against the passion, the bigotry, the spiritual anxiety and allied distempers by which many historical works, in other respects great, have been so wofully disfigured.

In brief, then, the greatness of Gibbon was due to a combination (an almost unique one) of good sense, sceptical erudition, and exceptionally favourable external circumstances. The importance of the last condition Gibbon himself would have been the last to undervalue. His book remains the one English historical work which is reprinted and reissued, with commentaries and notes, as if it were an original, not a secondary authority; and it seems likely to outlive the *History* of a probably much greater man, Macaulay.

David Hume (1711—1776), the younger son of John

[1] To Voltaire and St. John his thought owed much. Steeped in their writings, he regarded Christianity as an exploded superstition which no man of intelligence would profess to believe unless handsomely paid for doing so. It is noteworthy that Gibbon employed no amanuensis, and that he consulted with no one in any portion of his work.

Home, or Hume, laird of Ninewells, in Berwickshire, was born in Edinburgh in April, 1711. He was brought up as a child in the old house at Ninewells, but returned at eleven to "Edinburgh College." He showed little inclination either for law or commerce, and at twenty-three, after his father's death, he went to France to economise and indulge in solitary, monotonous literary contemplation. The result was, in 1739, his famous anonymous *Treatise on Human Nature,* which contains the whole of his philosophy in germ, and reveals the freshness of a young mind grappling with and developing to its full extent the idealism of Berkeley and the empiricism of Locke. The book, however, raised hardly a ripple of comment, and it was not until the appearance of his *Moral and Political Essays* in 1741-2 that Hume obtained any kind of literary recognition. He obtained a post as governor of an erratic noble, exchanged for the more congenial one of secretary to General St. Clair, travelled, saw something of court life and warfare, and began thriftily to accumulate money. The most important and original of his works in exposition of his "utilitarian theory" was the *Inquiry into the Principles of Morals* of 1751. His outspoken hostility to the miraculous prevented his getting the comfortable chair and fixed salary which he coveted in Edinburgh. He obtained, however, with some difficulty, the post of librarian at the Advocates' Library. The command of books impelled him to be the historian of the English, a race which he despised. This labour completed, he revisited France in the capacity of secretary to Lord Hertford, and was enthusiastically welcomed in French salons as an atheist, though he outraged Helvetius by denying the soft impeachment and stating that he had never seen an atheist. Buckle, years afterwards, said he had known only one, and that one a Cabinet minister. He became (in spite of Rousseau's frenzy of bitterness against him for befriend-

ing him) the most good-humoured, fat, and self-complacent of deists. He was the hero of supper-tables and tavern-clubs in the most exclusive Edinburgh society, and was ready (the old pagan) to believe anything except the Bible. He frequently sat under his old friend Robertson in the Greyfriars Church, and always upheld the old-fashioned claret against the new-fangled port. In his most intimate moments he spoke broad Scots, and the literary forms of English were always a burden to his back and a snare to his feet. It was on August 25th, 1776, that his friends, notably Adam Smith, were summoned to see how a "sceptic" could die, and Edinburgh mourned the loss of one of its kindliest, drollest, shrewdest, and blandest citizens. Hume gives us, with his own pen, a brief account of the conception of his famous *History*.

Hume's *History of England*, the first volume of which appeared in 1754, consists rather of a series of brilliant illustrations of an *à priori* theory than of a serious inquiry into facts, upon which alone any inductive process can properly be based. Moved by an intense disgust at the party manœuvres, misnamed politics, of his own time, as exemplified by the narrow chicanery of the dominant Whig party, Hume was disposed to exalt the government of the Stuart kings, from whose tyranny the Whigs were never tired of priding themselves that they had emancipated the country. He went so far as to assert that in all history it would be difficult to find a reign more unspotted and unblemished than that of James I. The paradox that the revolution of 1688, so much belauded by Whig writers, was in reality a retrograde step, pleased Hume more as he proceeded; and, in his last revision of his work, he assiduously softened or expunged "many villainous, seditious Whig strokes which had crept into it," being convinced that he had not done enough to canonise Laud or to whitewash Strafford. Having in his second volume (1766)

carried the work from 1649 to 1688, he determined, as an answer to his numerous critics, to work backwards, and show from a survey of the Tudor period that his Tory views were based upon a study of the English constitution as then settled. In 1759 this portion of the work appeared, and in 1761 *The History of England* was completed by the history of the pre-Tudor periods; this last part was deformed by Hume's carelessness and ignorance, and is unworthy of the portions relating to Tudor and Stuart times. These show Hume as a thorough partisan of strong government, and as a very moderate lover of the boasted "liberty" for which he deemed that so rude a beast as an Englishman was unfitted; yet they place his work far above the narrow sectarian bigotry of the memoir-writers, or the unmitigated dulness of the chronological compilers who had hitherto done duty as historians. In the literature of history Hume's book must, as in many respects a pioneer work, always retain a position; while in the history of literature, also, his book has a distinct place. It was the first attempt at a really comprehensive and thoughtful treatment of historic fact, the first to introduce the social and literary aspects of a nation's life in due subordination to its civil and political history, and the first large piece of historical writing in England to be graced with the polish and at the same time with the vivacity of a modern style.

With the *History* of Hume is commonly associated the very inferior compilation of the novelist Tobias Smollett. Smollett's *History* was primarily a bookseller's venture designed to take the wind out of the sails of Hume. Commencing in 1756, Smollett hurried through eighteen centuries before the close of that year, and his *History,* from Julius Cæsar to the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, appeared in four quarto volumes during 1757-8. Hume wrote ironically of his rival as seated on the historical

summit of Parnassus, and complained bitterly of the extraordinary run upon the new *History of England.* Smollett states with pride that he consulted more than three hundred books in compiling the work, which was reissued during 1758-9 in sixpenny parts, and had an enormous sale. A continuation (1763) brought Smollett's work down to 1760, and the portion of the combined work from 1688 to 1760 was subsequently modified and slightly abbreviated in order to form a continuation to Hume. Smollett had an *atelier* of satellite scribes, something after the manner of Alexander Dumas *père;* but Smollett managed to infuse into the work a characteristic vigour of style which is the one merit that it possesses.

William Robertson, born in a Midlothian manse on September 19th, 1721, rivalled or surpassed his two fellow-countrymen in historical fame, and came level with them also as a writer of English prose—an art which had hitherto never flourished in Scotland. In 1759, after six years' labour, Robertson produced his first large work, *The History of Scotland during the Reigns of Mary and James VI. down to 1603.* Unlike Hume's, Robertson's style was Johnsonian, and the sonorous correctness of his periods created an extraordinary impression in England. People asked, as of Macaulay, "Where did he get that style?" in which such an excellent judge as Chesterfield professed to trace the eloquence of Livy. But with these Livian and declamatory qualities went a lack of idiomatic vigour which is sensibly felt by the modern reader, lending to Robertson's pages a monotony that is absent from those of Hume or Smollett. Gibbon frequently has a caustic phrase, short and sharp; but Robertson's sentences are almost invariably long, terribly antithetic, laboriously balanced.

The historian's next work, a *History of the Emperor Charles V.* (1769), in favour of which he had rejected

plans for histories of England, of Greece, of Learning, of Leo X., is justly regarded as his masterpiece, and rendered his fame European. The introduction, forming a descriptive estimate of the "dark ages" (700—1100 A. D.), was one of the first successful attempts in England at historical generalisation on the basis of large accumulation of fact. Many of Robertson's conclusions are, of course, now quite obsolete (many of them were, indeed, ably traversed by Dr. S. R. Maitland); his data were necessarily very imperfect, as was also his sympathy with mediæval history, in respect to which he almost inevitably shared the Voltairean prejudices of Hume. Yet the suggestiveness of his method has greatly impressed and not infrequently inspired successive generations of historical students; and the intrepidity, combined with shrewdness, with which he grappled with the most thorny subjects, such as Frankish land tenures, seems to show that if he had, like Gibbon, been able to soak himself in continental erudition and to concentrate his whole attention upon historical work, he might have attained a position in the very highest rank of historians. Robertson's third work, the *History of America* (1777), did not tend to increase his reputation, but some of the episodes in it contain the best passages in point of style that came from his pen.

The period subsequent to the recorded labours of Dugdale and Wood exhibited some very remarkable historical and legal antiquaries, mostly Oxford men, whose ant-like industry prepared foundations upon which all subsequent scholars have to a very large extent been content to build. Such were William Nicolson (1655—1727), Bishop of Carlisle, who accumulated a marvellous collection of MSS. and official documents, and who published his great *Historical Library*, providing a rapid view of the accumulated riches of our old chronicle literature, between 1696 and 1724; and Thomas Tanner (1674—1735), another Queen's College man, was author of two antiquarian compilations famous to all students, the first as the *Notitia*

Monastica (1695), and the second, Tanner's immortal *Bibliotheca Britannica* (1748), an account of English authors from the earliest times down to Bacon, the result of forty years' research.

Edward Lhuyd (1660—1709), of Jesus, Oxford, did for Wales what Nicolson had attempted for the rest of the Britanniæ in his *Archæologia Britannica*. Thomas Rawlinson (1681—1725), the great collector of his time, the "Tom Folio" of *The Tatler*, supplied the historians of his time with materials much as Charles Cotton had done a century before him. White Kennett (1660—1728), of St. Edmund Hall, having studied philology from Somner and Hickes, became a great topographer and historical annotator, gave his name to a bookseller's *History of England*, and wrote the portion from 1660 to 1700, so severely traversed by Roger North. Kennett's impenitent Whiggism led to his being introduced as Judas Iscariot into the mural paintings of High Churchmen. As Georgian Bishop of Peterborough he was not called upon to submit to any severer form of martyrdom, but went on compiling contentedly down to the day of his death. Similar in kind, but more valuable, were the editions of Leland and of our older chronicles undertaken by that tireless "implicit transcriber" Thomas Hearne (1678—1735), the great Oxford antiquary, son of a parish clerk, another alumnus of "Teddy" Hall, but, unlike Kennett, the most bigoted of Jacobites. Refusing the most tempting librarianships under a Brunswick dynasty, he lived and died a private person at Oxford, studying, collecting, and preserving antiquities to the end, in June, 1735. His Diary is a record of one of the most profound and narrow-minded antiquaries that England can boast.

Thomas Rymer (1641—1713), of Sidney Sussex, who wrote a narrow, almost childishly silly, censure upon *Othello* and *Paradise Lost*, is better remembered as a historiographer, and editor of the famous compendium of British treaties known as *Rymer's Fœdera* (a syllabus of the seventeen folio volumes was compressed into three by Sir Thomas Hardy in 1869-85).

Thomas Madox (1666—1727), a man of truly formidable historical and legal erudition, collected rolls and charters, wrote on the *Firma Burgi* or Municipal Constitutions of Britain, and also compiled a most elaborate *History of the Exchequer of the Kings of England* (1711).

Of the minor historians and antiquarians of the second and

third quarters of the eighteenth century a very short notice will suffice to indicate the general character and literary importance, which is relatively small. One of the most laborious, from the point of view of research, was Thomas Carte (1686—1754), a nonjuror and a Jacobite, whose laborious *Life of Ormonde* (1736) has preserved its author's reputation as a diligent researcher, better than his equally laborious *History of England* to 1654, which came out in four volumes between 1747 and 1755. Carte's investigations enabled him to expose many errors in the accredited Whig histories, such as those of White Kennett and the more impartial Rapin, though his zeal in affirming that his divinely conferred gift of healing the scrofula was still inherent in the Pretender alienated many of his subscribers. One of the most respected of historians of the early 'fifties was George Lyttelton (1709—1773), the Good Lord Lyttelton, whose *History of Henry II.* eventually appeared in 1767. To this work it would be unfair to deny the merit of protracted research; but this is about all that can well be said in its favour. It shows, says Walpole, how dull one may be if one but takes pains for seven-and-twenty years. The materials are so ill-arranged and the style so insufferably prolix that it has come to be regarded as the English parallel of the Italian *History* of Guicciardini, to which, rather than read it, the condemned criminal preferred to go the galleys. A very superior work was the detailed *History of the Military Transactions with the British Nation in Indostan from 1745* (1763 to 1778) of Robert Orme (1708—1801), the son of an army doctor in the East India Company's service, who was himself for some years Accountant-General in India. Orme was ignorant both of the languages and the classical literature of India, but the epical quality of his narrative (much of it the work of an eye-witness) gave his *History* a standard value down to the time of James Mill and Macaulay, who praised the *History* warmly. It was a favourite reading with Colonel Newcome, and was read with enthusiasm, as a boy, by Sir Walter Scott, who recurred to it in his last years in *The Surgeon's Daughter.* In 1777 appeared the *History of Philip II. of Spain,* by Robert Watson (1730—1781), a St. Andrews minister, professor, and imitator of Robertson, whose book was well esteemed in its day and praised by Horace Walpole, though it has since been quite superseded by Prescott.

John Campbell (1708—1775), who compiled untold volumes

of a quasi-erudite character at the rate of two guineas a sheet, is chiefly associated with the ancient and modern *Universal History*, which was projected by the booksellers, in twenty-three enormous volumes, between 1736 and 1765. Campbell, under the nominal supervision of Smollett, was one of the directors of this voluminous work, for many years the laughing-stock of European scholars. Among the chief contributors and translators employed (most of whom were Scotsmen) may be mentioned Archibald Bower (1686—1766), a Dundee man, an ex-Jesuit, who wrote on ecclesiastical and papal history; William Guthrie (1708—1770), a reporter on *The Gentleman's Magazine;* George Sale (1697—1736), the Oriental scholar, a native of London, who devoted himself to Arabic studies, and published in 1734 his famous translation of the Koran, the first adequate rendering into any European language. Sale, who had also contributed to Boyle's *General Dictionary*, undertook a *Survey of Oriental History from the Flood*, and this was published three years after his death. Among his other collaborators on the *Universal History* were John Swinton, Captain Shelvocke, and George Psalmanazar (see p. 706). A collateral compiler, Robert Henry (1718—1790), in his once well-known *History of England* (1771-85) in six volumes, was one of the first to classify his work under such headings as Learning, Art, Manners, Religion, and so on, in preference to the continuous chronological arrangement. Of much more genuine interest to the scholar than any of these compilations are the antiquarian labours of those collectors of historical documents who based annals upon a study of original documents, or digested original materials, and manipulated them in such a manner as to render new facts and results readily available to the historian proper. Such labours are only indirectly, perhaps, of literary importance. But it was only upon such a substructure the Gothic or romantic revival (and the renewed interest in and the fairer appreciation of the Middle Ages, which supplies one of its chief *stimuli*) could possibly be reared. Among such works observe the *Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth* (1751) of Thomas Birch; the *Memorials and letters of James I. and Charles I.* (in 1760 and 1766), and the *Annals of Scotland* (1776), of Sir David Dalrymple (1726—1792), known on the Scottish bench as Lord Hailes; the curious anti-Whig *Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland* (*1680-94*), published in three volumes in 1771 by Sir John

Dalrymple (1726—1810); the *Original Papers*, containing the Secret History of Great Britain (1666 to 1774), brought out by James Macpherson, of Ossian fame, in 1775; the *Biographical History of England* (1769) of James Granger (1723—1776), the famous print-collector and book-despoiler; the *Illustrations of British History* and still familiar *Portraits of Illustrious Personages* of Edmund Lodge (1756—1839); the *Regal and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of England* (1773) of Joseph Strutt (1749—1802), author of the well-known volumes on the Dress, Sports, and Pastimes of the English People and of the antiquarian romance (*Queenhoo Hall*) which set Scott thinking of *Waverley;* the *Ecclesiastical History of England* (1757) of Ferdinando Warner (1703—1768); the *Historical and Critical Inquiry* (1759) of William Tytler (1711—1791), the discoverer of the *Kingis Quair;* and the *Mary Queen of Scots Vindicated* (1788) of John Whitaker (1735—1808), the last two works having both been provoked by the treatment accorded to Mary by Robertson in his *History of Scotland*, a book of great impartiality, which was also attacked as being much too favourable to the unfortunate Queen. The Scottish group would hardly be complete without mention of John Pinkerton (1758—1826), a collector of Scots songs, an early authority on medals, and author of a *History of Scotland under the Stuarts;* this was published in 1797, in which year Pinkerton also issued his *Iconographia Scotica.* A brief reference is also due to Jacob Bryant (1715—1804), the distinguished classical antiquary, a friend of Madame d'Arblay (Frances Burney), and one of the first collectors of Caxton, who wrote on Troy, and was the author of learned but much criticised *Observations and Inquiries relating to Ancient History* (1767). The valuable repository of antiquarian learning known as the *British Topography* of Dr. Richard Gough (1735—1809) appeared in 1768; planned when he was a youth at Cambridge, it contains a minute description of public records, maps, engravings, and printed materials available for the study of British antiquities. Gough and his friend John Nichols (1745—1826), the apprentice and finally the partner of the learned printer William Bowyer, were the two great bulwarks of the prosperous *Gentleman's Magazine*, which, started by Edward Cave in 1731, became the reigning oracle of the eighteenth century. In later days this genial old magazine was edited in turn by John Bowyer Nichols and John Gough Nichols. Nichols, still known

as the editor of Swift and Hogarth, of the *Literary Anecdotes*, of *The Progresses of Elizabeth*, and the *History of Leicestershire*, was, perhaps, the most industrious bookman of his day. Gough's *Topography* was followed in 1786 by his great work on Sepulchral Monuments, and three years later by his noble edition of Camden's *Britannia*. Inferior to these books in scholarship was the *Antiquities of England and Wales*, brought out between 1773 and 1787 by Francis Grose (1731—1791), the son of a wealthy jeweller of Swiss origin, who dissipated his patrimony and spent the latter part of his life in rambling antiquarian researches. He also wrote on Etymology and Armour, was a fluent draughtsman, and published two volumes of *Casual Essays, the Grumbler*, and *The Olio*, of 1793.

Two writers upon our native institutions, although far inferior in erudition to scholars of a past age such as Selden and Madox, were fortunate in their generation, for the halo which had become attached to the English constitution since 1688 was never larger than at the period when abuses seemed likely to submerge it for good and all. *The Constitution of England* by the spendthrift Swiss *emigré*, John Louis De Lolme, first appeared in French in 1771 and then, four years later, was translated into excellent English. It flattered the national pride by making the English constitution appear as near perfection as a human contrivance in equilibrium can well be. The discussion about Wilkes and the rise of English radicalism also directed a good deal of attention in the way of De Lolme's *Essay*, which reached a fifth edition in 1807—the year of its author's death. He is said to have recanted his liberal views in his old age and to have taken service under Napoleon. Sir William Blackstone has acquired fame as a jurist out of all proportion to his talents. Born in Cheapside in 1723, he went to Pembroke College, Oxford, from Charterhouse at the age of fifteen, and as a young man had a good conceit of himself as a poet; he could not obtain practice in London, so he became Vinerian Professor of Law in Oxford, as others have done before and since. In 1761 he entered Parliament, and two years later became Solicitor-General, concluding his career in 1770 as a Justice of Common Pleas. The four volumes of his *Commentaries on the Law of England* were given to the world in 1765-9. Blackstone's style is clear, ornate, and graceful, his book a good "gentleman's law book," clear but not deep. His method is not scientific, and he was not

comprehensive-minded enough to weigh the law from a legislator's point of view. His *Commentaries* were very severely handled by Bentham and by Austin and his school. But in the meantime they had established a place for themselves as a classic of English law. Their influence has been great, not merely in our island, but over two continents. For Blackstone was profoundly studied by Madison, Hamilton, Jefferson, and the other fathers of the American constitution, and, from the vantage-ground thus gained, Blackstone has made his mark upon the institutions of Europe. All unconscious of this far-reaching destiny, he died at Wallingford on February 14th. 1780, *æt.* 56. Educationally "Blackstone" is still a great name, while his book is often referred to in the courts to this day as a standard of all but primary authority.

The best editions of Gibbon's *History* are those by Milman and Bury.* The *Memoirs* first issued by Lord Sheffield in 2 vols., 1827, have been re-edited by Milman, Murray, Birkbeck Hill,* and O. F. Emerson; while the *Letters* were edited by R. E. Prothero in 1896. See also J. Cotter Morison's *Gibbon*, P. Anton's *Masters in History*, Grant's *English Historians* (1906), and Seccombe's *Age of Johnson* (1898).

For Hume, J. Hill Burton's *Life and Correspondence of David Hume* and Dr. Birkbeck Hill's *Letters of Hume to Strachan* must be supplemented by Huxley's sketch * of Hume's philosophical position in the "English Men of Letters," and by James Orr's *David Hume and his Influence* (1903); see also *Revue des Deux Mondes*, November 1st, 1856; A Schatz, *L'Œuvre économique de D. Hume* (1902); M. Tesseire, *Les Essais économiques de D. Hume* (1902). Both Hume and Robertson are well depicted in H. G. Graham's *Scottish Men of Letters of the Eighteenth Century*.

CHAPTER VI

THE CAVE OF THE POETS

"To a reader of Thomson's own generation *The Seasons* must have come as the revelation of a fresh world of beauty. Such passages as those which describe the first spring showers, the thunderstorm in summer, the trout fishing, the sheep washing, and the terrors of the winter night, were not only strange to the public of that day, but were new in English poetry."—BEERS, *English Romanticism.*

"These divine truisms make me weep."—TENNYSON on GRAY'S *Elegy.*

Poetic nonconformists—"Jemmy" Thomson—William Shenstone—Thomas Gray—William Collins—The Wartons.

A GREAT defect of the Grand Siècle in France and of the Augustan Age in England was their lack of historical and antiquarian sentiment, and their insensibility to the idea of historic continuity. The age of Pope and Swift knew hardly anything about the great Elizabethan literature, and still less of the great writers before that epoch. The Augustans thought pretty well of themselves, and no doubt imagined that they knew practically everything worth knowing. We know that they were far from encyclopædic: the *Encyclopædia Britannica* was indeed still undreamt of. A smattering of everything was still unattainable to the connoisseurs of the early Georges, and they fastened upon Dryden, Pope, Boileau, and the classics as the models best worthy of their close and unremitting attention. The narrowing effect of this tendency cannot be gainsaid. At the same time both tendency and effect have been grossly exaggerated by the critics of the nineteenth century, whose foible has never been a profound knowledge

of the eighteenth. The spell cast by Pope over the poetry of the mid-eighteenth century is freely admitted; but it is very easy to overestimate and to generalise far too readily upon this basis. Slavish imitation is the badge of none but very second-rate poets. The cult of Pope was the established relegion of taste, no doubt, but there were always non-conformists both active and numerous, whose ideal chapels dotted the land and multiplied almost as rapidly as the material chapels of the Methodists. Curiously enough the revolts against formalism in religion and poetry broke out almost simultaneously. And the poetic revolt was much more versatile and many-sided than the religious. It is extraordinary, in fact, how, beginning with Thomson in 1726, the ideals of the Augustan Age were with scant ceremony to be put aside and reversed. Blank verse is seen beginning to supersede the heroic couplet, against which, by reason of its very perfection in Pope's hands, the poets of the rising generation felt that they must protect themselves at all hazards. Similarly, experiments, first playful, but very quickly more serious, were being made with the stanza of *The Faerie Queene,* and later on with the sonnet form, the very name of which provoked in critics of the Johnsonian school the sort of disdain a Beethoven might feel for a toy symphony. With Shenstone and Philips and Percy in another direction the cultivation of the old ballad literature began. Gray stands for an awakened curiosity in Scandinavian and Icelandic poetry and antiquities. He also represents very well in England what Rousseau blazed abroad—the development of a new, passionate, and increasingly intimate love of wild external nature, partly as a reaction and a protest against the courtly and suburban elegances of Twickenham and Versailles.

To pretend, then, that the poetic heart of the eighteenth century was Popean to the core is nothing short of an

extravagance. The tradition of Mr. Pope was cherished among versifiers throughout the century, no doubt, just as the poetic ideals of Scott and Macaulay are cherished even to-day, and for similar reasons. The diction, too, which Dryden and Pope had transmitted and modified from Milton remained to most of the poets of the day an embarrassing source of wealth. But one need not regard the poetasters of the time and the recipes that they employed as the exclusive depositories of poetic tradition. There were a number of true poets in the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century to whom all credit is due as pioneers and precentors of the romantic movement under the depressing conditions to which innovators in poetry are commonly subject. They may strike us as rather a feeble band after the great romantics of Elizabethan days. Four of them were mentally deranged (Collins, Smart, Cowper, Blake), while Gray was a perfect hermit, and Shenstone and Thomson the most indolent of recluses. The most virile of the group, perhaps, was a boy who died at the age of seventeen. All of them were bachelors, with the single exception of Blake, and a more despondent group of artists, as a whole, it would not, perhaps, be easy to discover. Catacombs and cypresses were the forms of imagery that came to them most naturally. Elegies and Funeral Odes were the forms of expression in which they felt at home. Yet they strove as a whole to follow the gleam in poetry, to reinstate imagination upon its throne, and to substitute the singing voice for the rhetorical recitative of the heroic couplet. And their influence, weak and tortuous though its workings were, eventually permeated our literature between 1730 and 1798, when the *Lyrical Ballads* heralded the new movement. We trace the first stirrings of these new impulses in the lives and careers of Thomson, Shenstone, Gray and Collins.

In July, 1692, Thomas Thomson, son of a gardener in

the employment of Mr. Edmonston, of Ednam, was appointed minister to that parish in the north-eastern corner of pastoral Roxburgh. Fifteen months after his settlement in Ednam, this pious and devoted, if somewhat gloomy and superstitious, minister married Beatrix Trotter, the daughter of a neighbouring yeoman. Their fourth son, James, born at Ednam Manse, and baptised in the kirk there on September 15th, 1700, was destined to be the descriptive poet *par excellence* of the eighteenth century, and one of the most notable forerunners of the romantic movement in this country. At twelve he went to school in a former chapel of the old Abbey at Jedburgh, and in 1715 proceeded to Edinburgh University. The boy had attracted some attention by his parts among the local gentry of Roxburghshire, and the somewhat freezing atmosphere of the class-rooms at Edinburgh chilled his young blood. His father would have overruled his objections to the ministry, but the good pastor had died in 1716. James, at twenty-five, decided upon trying his fortune in London, and there was no one to prevent him; through connections of his mother he got a footing as a tutor with the Hamiltons, Earls of Haddington, at East Barnet. While under their roof he began to combine some fragments of descriptive blank verse from a germ formed by a poem he had contributed to *The Edinburgh Miscellany* of 1720, grafted upon a MS. poem on Winter by his father's friend, Robert Riccaltoun. A bookseller was found to advance £3 upon it, and *Winter* was published in March, 1726. A second edition appeared in June, and *The Seasons,* as a complete whole, which he had not contemplated when he sat down to a blank verse "study" of a Scottish winter, grew out of its success. He proceeded with *Summer* as the antithesis of *Winter*. *Spring* followed in 1728, and the scheme was brought to a glorious conclusion with *Autumn* and the final *Hymn* in 1730. Between this date and 1746 he re-

vised the poems perpetually, subtracting freely, but more often adding, so that the net increase in the number of lines in the complete poem amounted to well over a thousand. By 1730 Thomson had made a distinct reputation for himself, and there was a stampede to obtain seats for the production of his first tragedy, *Sophonisba,* which proved to be a feeble imitation of Otway. The poet's position was assured by a good patron. He travelled for two years, mainly in Italy, with Charles Talbot, son of the future Lord Chancellor, and three years later obtained from that dignitary a sinecure post (£300) as secretary of briefs. In 1736 we find him settled in a cottage with a pretty garden (in which he employed a Scots cousin) in Kew Foot Lane. Thence he used to walk to Pope's at Twickenham and Mallet's at Strand-on-the-Green. During this halcyon period he worked at his most-cherished poem, a huge epic on *Liberty* (five parts, 1734-6). Talbot died in 1737, but after a short period of anxiety Thomson found a new patron in George, first Lord Lyttelton. His second play, *Agamemnon,* brought him in a fair sum, and the Prince of Wales, on hearing that his finances were "in a poetical condition," granted him a pension of £100 a year. His best play, *Tancred and Sigismunda: A Tragedy* (in part translated into German by Lessing), was given at Drury Lane by Garrick on March 18th, 1745. In the meantime, during 1740, Thomson had contributed to a spectacular piece called *The Masque of Alfred,* first performed in the gardens at Cliefden House on August 1st, his noble ode known as *Rule, Britannia,* the music for which was composed by Dr. Arne. The famous ode echoes sentiment and phrases which had already done duty in Thomson's patriotic poems, *Britannia* (1729) and *Liberty.* In 1736 *The Gentleman's Magazine* had printed the first of several poems by Thomson "To Amanda." Eight years elapsed without impairing the bard's fidelity to this lady,

Elizabeth, daughter of Captain Gilbert Young. But her relatives were opposed to the match—"he'll write ballads and you'll sing them," said they—and in 1744 the lady married Admiral Campbell. The disappointment preyed upon Thomson's spirits, and retarded the progress, already sluggish, which he made with his second important poem, *The Castle of Indolence* (1748). It was first conceived in the form of a few detached Spenserian stanzas in raillery of his own indolence, which he deemed to be well paralleled by that of his friends. The first stanzas answering to this conception are finely artistic, and in the drowsy effect which they suggest, Thomson shows himself a master of onomatopœic verse not unworthy of the creator of *The Lotus Eaters.* The singer of Morpheus was a sincere colourist, and he managed to throw over his canvas a romantic iridescence and atmosphere quite peculiarly Thomsonian. "There is a magic art in the description of the land of drowsyhead, with its listless climate always atween June and May, its stockdove's complaint amid the forest deep, its hillside woods of solemn pines, its gay castles in the summer clouds, and its murmur of the distant main." Unhappily the poet was not destined to revise his too-fragmentary and unequal poem. After a brisk walk, he caught a severe chill in a boat between the Mall, Hammersmith, and Kew Bridge. He died on August 27th, 1748, and was buried in Richmond Parish Church, aged not quite forty-eight. His requiem was sung by Shiels and Shenstone; and once again in the noble elegiac ode, "In yonder grave a druid lies," by William Collins, the lyrist of that twilight close upon the dawn which Thomson must always represent for us in nature poetry.[1]

[1] Thomson was a good trencherman and a gay dog when a carouse was toward. His rhapsodies about innocency, his denunciation of luxury, and his praise of early rising and cold bathing sounded rather hollow to some of his contemporaries

The Seasons may be regarded as inaugurating a new era in English poetry. Lady Winchilsea, John Philips, the author of *Cyder,* and John Dyer, whose *Grongar Hill* was published a few months before *Winter,* had pleaded, by their work, for a truthful and unaffected and, at the same time, a romantic treatment of nature in poetry; but the ideal of artificiality, by which English poetry was dominated under the influence of Cowley and Pope, was first effectively challenged by Thomson. It was he who transmitted the sentiment of nature not only to imitators like Savage, Armstrong, Somerville, Mickle, and Shenstone, but also to Gray and Cowper, and so indirectly to Wordsworth. Cowper, in particular, was interpenetrated with the spirit and feeling of *The Seasons,* and it is related in a pathetic passage how in the last glimmerings of cheerfulness before his final collapse, he walked in the moonlight in St. Neot's churchyard and "spoke earnestly of Thomson's *Seasons,* and the circumstances under which they were probably written." *The Seasons* itself falls

from the lips of a bard "more fat than bard beseems," who used to lie abed till noon, and who, as Savage told Johnson, was perhaps never in cold water in his life. Other tales are told of how he used to cut his books with the snuffers and devour the sunny halves of wall peaches with his hands in his pockets. He had a good cellar, had our worthy surveyor of the Leeward Islands, and he was a collector in a quiet way of prints and poetry. He would sit up all night humming poetry over to himself, striding about the room, sounding a fine rhythm, and occasionally, carried away by his emotion, sobbing vehemently. It is curious to think of him intoning his verse in broad Scots. The players could not contain themselves when he read over *Agamemnon* to them with his strong North British accent. The story is well-known of Dr. Burney finding the poet in bed two hours after noon, and asking him what was the matter, and Thomson's rejoinder, "Ecod, mon, but a had no mottive to rise." A Life is promised by Prof. G. C. Macaulay; the best we have is L. Morel's *James Thomson: Sa Vie et ses Œuvres,** 1895.

short of being a masterpiece, owing to the strong alloy of poetic diction in the Popean sense; the very blank verse has been passed through the strainer of the heroic couplet. But it gave the signal for a revolution which was destined to renew European literature, and it maintained its reputation almost unimpaired until the final triumph of the romantic school in the nineteenth century. In the home of his birth Thomson's celebrity was supreme down to 1820, when it seemed quite suddenly to founder, supplanted by the cult of Burns.

Son of a small gentleman of Worcestershire, and favourite pupil of Sarah Lloyd, famous henceforward as *The Schoolmistress,* William Shenstone was born on November 13th, 1714. Going up to Oxford in 1732 he became one of the idle "singing-birds" of Pembroke. At Oxford he is said to have signalised his natural tastes by wearing his own hair instead of a wig. In 1745 he inherited a Shropshire farm, called the Leasowes, in the parish of Halesowen, and an annuity of some £300. He was of an indolent, retiring, and somewhat melancholy temperament; and, instead of pursuing a professional career, he settled down upon his property, and began to turn it into a *ferme ornée.* There he wooed the rustic Muse in elegy, ode, and pastoral ballad, sounding upon the vocal reed the beauties of simplicity and the vanity of ambition, and mingling with these strains complaints of Delia's cruelty and the shortness of his own purse, which hampered him seriously in his gardening designs. But landscape gardening was the preoccupation of his soul. There were fountains, urns, and cisterns, vistas and rustic seats, and inscriptions in verse everywhere. Celebrities came from all parts of the country to banter the virtuoso, but to imitate his dripping fountain, his piping fawn, and his "ruinated priory." Like his contemporary John Byrom, Shenstone was a clever experimenter and innovator in

verse. As he went hopping about his gravel walks, as Gray kindly put it, he composed a quantity of verse (poetry and consumption, as he said, are the most flattering of diseases), and if it was not very first-rate poetry, it was at any rate, as Fuseli said of Blake, "d——d good to steal from." In 1737, in the first version of *The Schoolmistress,* in a slender volume of college *Poems on Various Occasions* (1737), Shenstone essayed the Spenserian stanza, which but for a few experiments by Prior, had been in almost absolute disuse for the past century. Equally admirable with his management of this difficult measure, in a delicately humorous descriptive poem, are the anapæstics of *A Pastoral Ballad* (1755), including those charming lines:

> She gazed as I slowly withdrew,
> My path I could hardly discern;
> So sweetly she bade me adieu,
> I thought that she bade me return.

Cowper owed something to these, and Gray much more to the *Elegies* scattered about his poems, most of which were published in the first instance in Dodsley's *Miscellanies,* or, rather, *Collections of Poems.* His pieces were first collected by Dodsley in three volumes (1764-9).

Considering the smallness of Shenstone's range it is remarkable, perhaps, that he should have written so many stanzas that live, as many of *The Schoolmistress* do—a poem particularly admired in its time by Goldsmith and Burns—and one at least of those *Lines written in an Inn at Henley*:

> Whoe'er has travell'd life's dull round,
> Where'er his stages may have been,
> May sigh to think he still has found
> His warmest welcome at an inn.

Occasional writing in verse and pottering over his gardens seem to have been the natural vocation of Shenstone.

He was rather too querulous to be an agreeable letter-writer, and his miseries are too Lilliputian to be of profound interest. His letters are filled with the little complaints, the little gratifications, the little journeys, the little studies, and the little criticism of one whom indolence and rustication had reduced to a little man; yet he wrote some agreeable *Essays* (among the best written during the gap between Steele and Goldsmith); he had some good friends; and the sinecure for which he yearned seemed maturing, when, early in February, 1763, he got a severe chill, died at the Leasowes, unmarried, on February 10th, and was buried in Halesowen churchyard four days later. His life, says Johnson, in that masterpiece of polite raillery which he dedicates to Shenstone, "was unstained by any crime." Apart from his metrical experiments he helped in the cause of Romanticism by the generous aid and encouragement which he gave to Percy in preparing his *Ancient Ballad Poetry* for the press.[1]

Thomas Gray, fifth child of Philip Gray, a London scrivener, was born in Cornhill, London, on December 26th, 1716. His mother Dorothy (born Antrobus), owned the business which was carried on in Philip Gray's shop; she quarrelled with her husband, a lazy and selfish man, who left her to pay for the son's education. Fortunately her brother, William Antrobus, was a master at Eton, where Gray was sent in 1727. There, with Horace Walpole, Richard West, and Thomas Ashton, he formed the little coterie afterwards known as the Quadruple Alliance; he proceeded to Peterhouse, where another uncle, Robert Antrobus, had been a fellow. He scorned his studies and cut his lectures; in 1739 he went on the grand tour as companion to Horace Walpole, but here again his fastidious and unconciliatory temper declared itself. He parted from Walpole, and returned home in September, 1741.

[1] See "A Forgotten Poet," *Cornhill*, January, 1902.

During his tour he wrote some descriptive letters to his friends which show a susceptibility to the picturesque side of things uncommon at that time. The summer of 1742 was spent by Gray with his mother and aunts (now retired from business) at Stoke Poges, where he wrote his best verses, *Ode to Spring, On a Distant Prospect of Elton College, Sonnet on the Death of West,* and the early stanzas of the *Elegy wrote in a Country Churchyard.* None of these were printed before 1747. In the winter of 1742 Gray resumed residence at Peterhouse, and buried himself among the classics. During the following year Gray first met (*vidit tantum*) Pope. In 1745 he was reconciled to Walpole, to whom, on March 1st, 1747, he sent his charming mock-heroic *Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat,* enshrined in a letter full of delicate persiflage. In this same year he commenced his friendship with a young scholar and poet of St. John's at Cambridge, William Mason, his future biographer and exploiter. Now, too, appeared his *Eton College Ode,* in a folio pamphlet of eight pages (Dodsley). It was reprinted next year with the *Ode to Spring,* and that on the *Death of Walpole's Cat,* in the second volume of Dodsley's *Collection of Poems* (1748). In 1749 Gray took up once more and laboured at his unfinished *Elegy;* he kept retouching it until June 12th, 1750, when he sent a copy to his poetical chancellor, Horace Walpole. Like Shakespeare's "sugared sonnets" or *Christabel,* it was circulated for some months in MS. Walpole's circle were apt to admire it as a most elegant *tour de force* by an unknown Cambridge don. In February, 1751, in order to anticipate a surreptitious issue by a magazine (*The Magazine of Magazines*), it was brought out in a quarto pamphlet entitled *An Elegy wrote in a Country Churchyard,* price 6*d.* "Nurse Dodsley has given it a pinch or two in its cradle," the sensitive author complained to Walpole. The *Elegy* commanded success no

less by its originality than by its lucidity and beauty. A train of moralising as obvious as that of "All the world's a stage" is wrought in the same perfect manner; in this case into a harmony of gentle pathos that at once saddens and soothes. There are one or two flaws, of course, and the number and regularity of the epithets tend generally to become oppressive; but, upon the whole, the diction, decoration, and treatment of the theme, as well as the choice of metre (used by Davenant in his *Gondibert* and Dryden in his *Annus Mirabilis*; also for this same purpose of elegy, before Gray's time, by James Hammond and Shenstone and others), consecrated by Gray's usage as "elegiac," are most artistically in accord. Few poems as a whole are more faultless. Its merit was patent even to an "age of prose." A rage set in for "night pieces" and churchyard soliloquies in verse. Yet few poems stand so serenely alone. It is the one poem which Gray really finished before he was forty, and it was by far his finest effort. "Had Gray written often thus it had been vain to blame and useless to praise him."

If anything could have kindled Gray's muse this resonant success must have done it. But Gray was a college don—with private means, a superior intellect, and nothing particular to do. When he published a few selected poems in 1753, they appeared as "*Designs by R. Bentley for six Poems by T. Gray.*" He was afraid of a barbed arrow being aimed at this *ridiculus mus* of production after twenty years of poetic labour. His own attempt at metrical pleasantry, after the manner of Prior in *A Long Story* (admiration of which Walpole made a *sine quâ non* of all his correspondents), had fallen remarkably flat, in spite of its distinguished patronage. The publication of his elaborate *Pindaric Odes* (Pindaric odes of many years' growth), *The Bard,* and *The Progress of Poesy* elicited the comment from Johnson: "Some that tried them confessed

their inability to understand them . . . many were content to be shown beauties they could not see." [1]

Gray seldom emerged from his college, *digito monstrari*; he read persistently and very widely, cultivated a circle of superior friends in letters, of which we still possess upwards of 350, not comparing indeed, as a *corpus* with the letters of Cowper, Walpole, or FitzGerald, but unsurpassed even in the golden age of letter-writing, in England; and travelled in search of the "picturesque," of which he was one of the first propagators. The bewildering succession of his studies between 1750 and 1770 illustrates the extraordinary activity and versatility of his mind. From such academic enthusiasms as Plato and Xenophon we find him turning with zeal to Gothic architecture, branching out from that into the study of mediæval and Scandinavian poetry, while in another direction he absorbs all that he can about heraldry and genealogy. His

[1] The drift of the *Odes* was held by plain folk and wicked wags such as Colman and Lloyd (authors of the burlesque odes on Obscurity and Oblivion) to be utterly impenetrable; but this very circumstance helped to raise Gray in the estimation of the unlearned, and when Colley Cibber died in 1757 (Goldsmith and Cowper being still mute), the Duke of Devonshire's offer of the laureateship to Gray was thought to be a popular move. He refused it for fear of the ridicule, as he refused a doctor's degree for fear of being confused with Dr. Zachary Gray. A like sensitiveness led to his migration at Cambridge. His London house having been burned down in 1748, he became morbidly afraid of fire (drunkenness, he averred, was so terribly prevalent at Cambridge). In January, 1756, he ordered a rope ladder from London. Some larky undergraduates at Peterhouse got wind of this and raised a false alarm of fire. Gray descended the cords like another Latude, and found himself in a large tub of water which his young friends had thoughtfully provided for his reception. The Master persisting in treating the occurrence as a "boyish frolic," the angry bard shook the dust of Peterhouse from his feet and moved to Pembroke, where he was nearly burned out in grim earnest in 1768.

historical interests are aroused, and the need of digesting chronicles and State papers allures him, in 1759, to the newly opened British Museum, in which (with two Prussians, Dr. Stukeley and another as sole companions) he is one of the first serious readers.

The vast learning that he acquired in this manner he transmitted not to the world but to private commonplace books. In the case of the great classified History of English Poetry which he had projected with Mason, he made over a large part of his material to Thomas Warton. The indirect influence of Gray's tastes was, in fact, much greater than would at first appear. But the last and strongest of his passions was his love for natural history. "His comments in his Linnæus," says Arnold, "are those of an intelligent naturalist. His notes on the signs of the approach of summer almost approach the delicacy of a 'Gil' White, or a Jefferies. He notes the changes of the landscape in the progress of the day; marks the hoar-frost that melts and exhales in a thin bluish smoke, and rejoices in the tender emerald green preserved late in the summer by the long rains."

The diary which he kept of the journey he made to the English Lakes in 1769 attests his exquisite sense of the beauties of natural scenery. He was, as we know, a great virtuoso in gardening as well as in painting, music, and architecture. In returning from the Letters to the Life we seem to be quitting the society of one of the most urbane, erudite, and interesting of correspondents for that of a somewhat queer-tempered, pedantic, and affected man. The affectation of superior elegance was due in large measure to Walpole, who had inoculated Gray with the flunkey virus at the age when he was most prone to a permanent infection.

The explanation of Gray's "sterility" by the fact that he was born in an "age of prose" is too silly to need refu-

tation. What poet is not born in an age of prose? Gray had a fairly long life, during which, in spite of the ridicule of a few old critics such as Johnson, his reputation gradually increased. He was born into the same age as Collins and Cowper, and, like them, suffered much from dejection ("my spirits are many degrees below changeable"); but whereas dejection inspired Cowper to exertion, and sent him forth to meet his Muse, it caused Gray to dally with the "bardic impulse" until it eluded him altogether. A more interesting question in regard to Gray is this: will posterity admit among the immortals a poet who carries such a very small volume of poetry under his arm? When the volume is opened, it is found to be written for the most part in copperplate of a highly conventional form (Gray's ordinary script was of a scholarly smallness and delicacy): the poems themselves suggest a tesselated work—a multitude of semi-archaic plaques upon a substructure of Dryden, with adjectival ornament of early-Miltonic type, together with a far-fetched abundance of personifications, compound words and hyphenated epithets. Every attribute of the poet to which scholarship, taste, refinement are contributary, he possessed to the full, but not linked, as in Milton's case, with strong creative or imaginative power. He can hardly thus be admitted into the fraternity of the *dii majores* of poetry, though as the writer of at least one imperishable poem he towers above the minors. As a factor in the romantic movement his letters (so keenly admired by Cowper) interest the historical student of literature much more than his poems.

Cambridge continued to be his chief place of residence, though he performed no duties there. The year 1759 he spent largely in Southampton Row, making researches into ancient and northern poetry at the newly opened British Museum. He was occasionally the guest of his aunts at Stoke Poges, of Walpole, Warton, and other friends. He

visited different parts of England and Scotland, and was one of the earliest ardently to celebrate the beauty of the Lakes, of the Wye, of the New Forest, and the Highlands. In 1771 he contemplated a visit to his young Cambridge friend Bonstetten at his home in Switzerland. On July 24th he was suddenly taken ill in Pembroke Hall; the next day the gout reached his stomach, and he died on July 30th, 1771.[1] He was buried in the churchyard at Stoke Poges, near the east window of the church, on August 6th.

A copious producer for the book-market, Johnson regarded the "costive" wit of the cloistered and fastidious Gray with a contempt not unusual in the professional who writes for pay towards the amateur who is amiably tickled at his own condescension in consenting to do anything so vulgar as to publish at all. He had a notion, says his great critic, "not very peculiar, that he could not write but at certain times, or at happy moments; a fantastic foppery, to which my kindness for a man of learning and of virtue wishes him to have been superior."

All the writer in Johnson was jealous of new-fangled ideas which he imperfectly understood; impatient of the unaccustomed diction, as Macaulay was of the novelties of Ruskin and Carlyle. As a man his good-humoured contempt for Gray's character was perfectly sincere. Gray was a fellow of a College in Cambridge, precise, finicking, and reserved in manner. The dignified little man had few intimates; he was a great reader, a scholar of marvellously wide range, reputed "the most learned man in

[1] *The Gentleman's Magazine* gives his death "31 July, Rev. Dr. Thomas Grey." Four errors in six words! The cream of Johnsonian comment is not in the *Lives of the Poets* but in *Boswell*.—"Boswell: I understand he was reserved and might appear dull in company; but surely he was not dull in poetry. Johnson: Sir, he was dull in company, dull in his closet, dull everywhere. He was dull in a new way, and that made many think him great. . . . Sir, he was a mechanical poet."

Europe." But, as Johnson saw and said, he did very little with his learning. Five or six poems was not a great result of so much reading. The niggardliness of the output was, however, more complex than Johnson supposed. He was a miser of immortal verse. Ill-health, a fondness for preparing prolegomena and parallel lines of investigation, while putting off the main issue, fastidiousness, the habit of reading on a sofa, the paralysing influence of a small circle of hypercritical dons—these are a few of the causes that help to explain it.

What Johnson failed to perceive was that beneath Gray's reserved exterior there was great depth of feeling; and that with all his minute scholarship he was a man of large and comprehensive views. Constitutional melancholy and self-distrust seem to have been the secrets of his small amount of production. But this was not known fully to the world until after his death. He never spoke out during his life. We can interpret him now by the light of his familiar letters, the cynosure of cultivated charm. But this was impossible when Johnson wrote, and any apparent injustice done to Gray by "Ursa Major" (Gray's own nickname for the great critic) was due, not to jealousy or wilful blindness, but to a want of knowledge that was inaccessible when Johnson wrote.

At the very time that Gray was composing his *Elegy* with such fastidious pains, Collins and the Wartons had published poems out of which every detail of his eventide picture might have been culled. These poets, like Gray himself, were in "that advancing line of which Thomson and Dyer were the fugle-men at an earlier date."

In Collins above all is to be found the germ of the romantic movement which blossomed in *Christabel*. The new notes which he sounded reverberate distinctly through the successive appeals from the classical school made by the Wartons, Gray, Chatterton, Percy, Russell and the

Ossianic poems. How far he was effective as an imitator is a point much more difficult to determine. There seems little doubt of the debt incurred to Collins by Gray, though Gray rebukes without ceremony the superior poet's incorrectness and lack of ear. Collins's exquisite *Ode to Evening* commences by appealing to a mode or phase of meditation closely akin to that of the *Elegy*.

The son of a hatter of 21, East Street, Chichester, where he was born on Christmas Day, 1721, William Collins was educated at Winchester[1] and at Queen's College, whence (like Addison) he migrated as a demy to Magdalen, Oxford. Of the number of his fellow-students and friends were White of Selborne, William Whitehead, and Joseph Warton. Amid the dissipation and "idleness" of his college days he published a slender volume of *Persian Eclogues* (1742); and he must have read widely and with some judgment, if we may go by the *Epistle* which he addressed to Sir Thomas Hanmer in 1743 on his edition of Shakespeare, and which contains a noteworthy if isolated fragment of criticism. As a career he contemplated vaguely first the church and then the army, but a rich uncle pronounced him too indolent "even for the army." At twenty-four he proceeded to London, having "many projects in his head." He "planned" tragedies, a history of the revival of learning, and a version of Aristotle's poetics. On December 20th, 1746, he published through the fashionable "A. Millar in the Strand" a thin octavo pamphlet of three and a half sheets, his *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects.* These included the *Ode to Evening,* the sounds of which steal slowly upon the senses like the very coming of eve, *The Passions,* and the

[1] In January, 1739, *The Gentleman's Magazine* had some lines by Collins; in October he and Warton both sent verses from Winchester, which Johnson praised. Collins's contribution was a sonnet.

flute-like *Ode to Pity*. The venture met with a chilling reception, though five of the best pieces were annexed in Dodsley's *Collection* of 1748. Collins in disgust cremated the "remainder" copies and sank into a dejected state. The frigidity of the public actually exercised upon him the numbing effect which it has erroneously been stated to have had upon Keats. Swinburne writes finely concerning his *Odes* that, compared with the fanfaronade and falsetto which impair the notes of Gray, there is in them hardly a single false note to be found; and not many less than sweet and strong. "There was, above all things, a purity of music, a clarity of style, to which I know no parallel in English verse from the death of Andrew Marvell to the birth of William Blake. Here, in the twilight which followed on the splendid sunset of Pope, was at last a poet, who was content to sing out what he had in him—to sing and not to say, without a glimpse of wit or a flash of eloquence." His one discerning critic among contemporaries was his neighbour at Richmond, James Thomson, on whose death in August, 1748, he wrote the pathetic ode containing these lines:

> Remembrance oft shall haunt the shore,
> When Thames in summer wreaths is drest,
> And oft suspend the dashing oar
> To bid his gentle spirit rest.

In 1749 he addressed his *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands,* his last surviving work, to John Home, the author of *Douglas*. This beautiful ode, prophetic of so much that has since come to pass in the sphere of imaginative poetry, shows that up to 1749 he was in full enjoyment of his powers. Anything that he wrote after this he destroyed. In 1749 he was rescued from poverty by his uncle's legacy. But as Johnson observes, "man is not born for happiness. Collins, who while he studied to live

felt no evil but poverty, no sooner lived to study than his life was assailed by more dreadful calamities, disease and insanity." A visit to France failed to cheer his mind. Relapsing into habitual melancholia, he was placed in an asylum at Chelsea, and he recovered so far as to be able to return to Chichester and revise his *Eclogues*. Johnson sympathised profoundly with the man ("whose state I have often been near myself"), though he could not appreciate his poetry. It is related that he used to wander through the aisles of Chichester Cathedral accompanying the organ with his moans. He died aged thirty-eight at his sister Elizabeth's house adjoining the cloisters.[1] A monument by Flaxman (with Hayley's inscription) was erected in the Cathedral about 1790.

Among the friends and poetic allies and abettors in literary antiquarianism of the school which Collins heralded, we must not omit to reckon with the Wartons. Joseph and Thomas Warton were the sons of Thomas Warton, vicar of Basingstoke, who had been a fellow of Magdalen, and Professor of Poetry at Oxford. Joseph was a schoolfellow of Collins at Winchester. He eventually became master of Winchester, and died there in 1800, *æt.* 78. Thomas was born at Basingstoke on January 9th, 1728, and, after coaching by his father, distinguished himself at Oxford (Trinity College), where he remained a familiar figure of a don for nearly fifty years. For romping with schoolboys, for heavily shotted jests in the common-room, for rousing buffoonery in the tavern, there was not such another as Tom Warton. Joseph made himself known by his candid criticism of Pope in his *Essay on the Genius* of that poet in 1757. Both brothers were enthusiastic for Spenser and

[1] He was buried opposite the pulpit in St. Andrew's Church, as an inscription records: "Wm. Collins, gent, d. June 15, 1759." The Poems of Collins are in the Aldine and in the Muses' Library (Johnson, Goldsmith, Gray, and Collins), 1905.

the older poetry. They were alike saturated with Milton, and their verse bears traces of the *Sonnets, Lycidas, L'Allegro,* and, above all, *Il Penseroso* in almost every line. They attempted to revive old verse-forms (the sonnet), old tastes (mediæval architecture), and old studies (British mythology), and to enlarge the moping owl and mortuary convention and vocabulary which were so inexpressibly dear to all these crepuscular romanticists. Thomas Warton not only championed "ode and elegy and sonnet," but wrote some very delicately tinted sonnets himself, and thereby won the praise of Southey and of Charles Lamb. Ridiculed by "Ursa Major" the Wartons became warm adherents of Gray in all his pet connoisseurships, and Thomas received as a direct legacy from the Cambridge professor (Gray was Regius Professor of History) a large quantity of critical material which he ultimately embodied in his epoch-making *History of English Poetry* (1774-81), forming a treasure-house of those clues by means of which students of poetry found their way back to the magic uplands of Romance. Joseph Warton died at Winchester in 1800, Thomas at Oxford in 1790. Five years earlier he had given to the world his priceless edition of Milton's *Early Poems,* one of the landmarks of English verse-craft. Of the Wartons it is well said that they did as much as any of their contemporaries to discover the enchanted horn which hangs suspended outside the halls of romance. But to wind a blast of the horn was beyond the reach of their art. That they had to leave poets of a more vigorous inspiration—to striplings, lusty as Coleridge, or with the youthful lungs of Chatterton and Keats.

If the Wartons represent the enthusiasms, they also represent the extravagances of the interesting but very *un*-spontaneous poets of what we might call the laboratory school of English verse. In order to sustain their fight against the tyranny of the Pope-standard these poets be-

came audibly dependent upon spells distilled from Milton and Spenser. The result is that their workmanship is but too often suggestive of the distorting effects of the mirror. Collins is undoubtedly the most exquisite and most lyrical of the group, Gray the finest scholar, Shenstone the least inspired though perhaps the most versatile. But Thomson was the most original, and that in a poem which he avowedly imitated from Spenser.[1]

[1] The early editions of Gray by Mason, Mitford, and Gilfillan have been eclipsed by the more recent editions of Bradshaw (Aldine), Gosse (Works in 4 vols.), D. C. Tover (Gray's *English Poems*, 1898, and W. L. Phelps (Selections, 1894, with short Bibliography). The best biographical sketch is that by Whitwell Elwin in his *Remains*. The poet is represented in a most agreeable light in his *Letters*, the most comprehensive edition of which is that commenced by D. C. Tovey in 1900, and in the little book on *The Poet Gray as a Naturalist* (1903) by Charles Eliot Norton, containing the most exquisite drawings by Gray of birds and insects. His rooms at college were completely filled with books, but in each window was a small garden. Hidden away under the books was an old harpsichord. Successive portfolios indicated the growth of his taste as a connoisseur of engravings. "Shakespeare and Linnæus contended for his soul." Such was Gray, the author of a poem which has given to multitudes "more of the exquisite pleasure of poetry than any other single piece in the glorious treasury of English verse."

CHAPTER VII

SAMUEL JOHNSON

"The last of the Tories . . . the bravest of the brave. . . . Few men on record have had a more merciful, tenderly affectionate nature than old Samuel. He was called the Bear; and did indeed too often look, and roar, like one; being forced to it in his own defence; yet within that shaggy exterior of his there beat a heart warm as a mother's, soft as a little child's. . . . Tears trickling down the granite rock: a soft well of Pity springs within!"—CARLYLE.

"The best proof that Johnson was an extraordinary character is that his character instead of being degraded has, on the whole, been decidedly raised by a work in which all his vices and weaknesses are exposed more unsparingly than they were ever exposed by Churchill or by Kenrick. . . . The memory of other authors is kept alive by their works. But the memory of Johnson keeps many of his works alive."—MACAULAY.

Education—Early struggle in London—The *Dictionary*—*The Rambler*—The *Lives of the Poets*—Dictator of the Club—Letter to Lord Chesterfield.

DR. JOHNSON'S very appearance is more familiar to us through portraits and descriptions than that of any other person of past generations. His massive figure still haunts Fleet Street, and he has "stamped his memory upon the remote Hebrides." His personal habits, his tricks of speech, his outlook upon life, all have become part of our national consciousness, and have encouraged both men in the past and men now living to support life with a manlier fortitude and an enlarged hope. The courage and beneficence of his own life, confirmed by the reports of all who knew him best, have justly become a treasured possession of the English race, of whose good points and of whose foibles he was an epitome. His intellect was not unworthy of his

other qualities, the strength and weakness of which it reflected with fidelity. His conversation was even more remarkable than his writings, admirable though the best of these were, and has conferred upon him a species of fame which no Englishman shares with him in any considerable degree. The exceptional traits which were combined in his personality have met in the person of Boswell with a delineator unrivalled in patience, dexterity, and dramatic insight. The result has been a portrait of a man of letters more lifelike than that which any other age or nation has bequeathed to us.

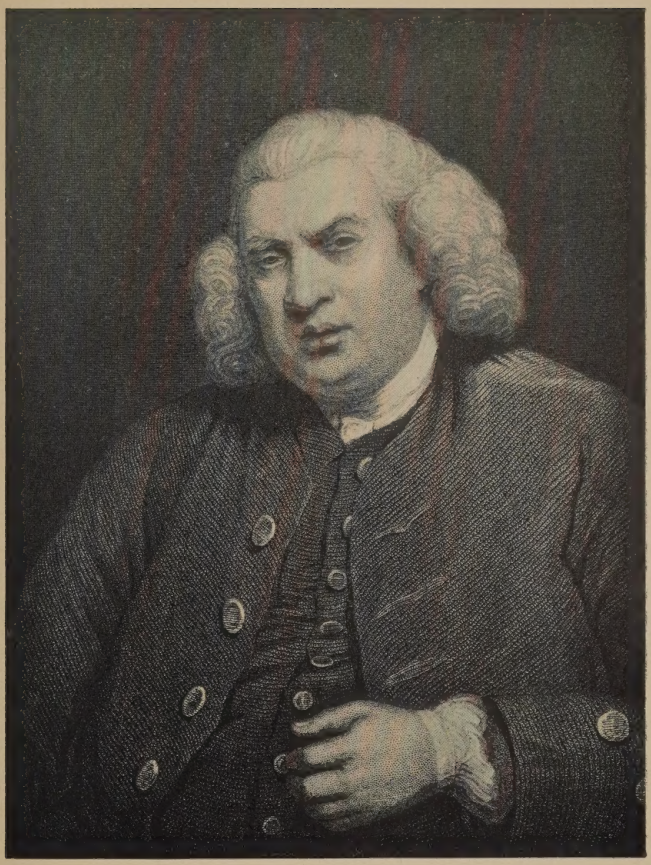
Samuel Johnson was born at Lichfield on September 18th, 1709. His father had a shop in Lichfield and a stall where he sold books at Birmingham, Uttoxeter, and other towns. He understood his trade, and was in addition a man of some learning. Of Mrs. Johnson we know little, save that she was pious and overanxious. In March, 1712, the youthful Samuel was taken up to London and touched by Queen Anne for the King's Evil (in other words, for the scrofulous malady which affected his eyesight and prejudiced his general health).

Johnson's progress as a scholar does not seem to have been prejudiced either by his ailment or by the repeated floggings which he had to undergo. After his return from school to Lichfield he loitered at home for two years, reading in a desultory and discursive fashion all the ancient writers in his father's shop. In 1728 he went into residence at Pembroke College, Oxford, as companion and private teacher to an old schoolfellow. He seems to have been a truant from university lectures, but was feared and respected for his immense memory, precocious wit and independence of mind, and out-of-the-way learning. But he had to leave Oxford, owing to lack of resources, at Christmas, 1729, and returned to Lichfield in a very hypochondriacal state without taking his degree. He could

already speak Latin fluently, and his knowledge of the phraseological resources of the tongue is made manifest by the fine translation of Pope's *Messiah* which he made in 1729. He added to this while at Oxford a sound knowledge of Greek. In addition to his Greek, Johnson's congenital Jacobitism was greatly strengthened and confirmed at Oxford. There, too, his religious views were vitalised by a reading of Law's *Serious Call to a Holy Life,* a book which he took up to laugh at, but found quite an "overmatch" for him. He always averred that he had wasted his time at Oxford, but his standard was, it might seem, impossibly high, for he once said he "never knew a man who studied hard." At the home to which he now returned there was no welcome for Johnson, and in March, 1732, he became usher in a school at Market Bosworth. His reason for leaving the school was that he was treated like a menial by the patron, Sir Wolstan Dixie, at whose table he had to say grace.

Of the £20 which Johnson's father had left him upon his death in December, 1731, little now remained. But, undaunted, the young man of twenty-two went to Birmingham and stayed with friends, spending whole days in bed, from which, in the early days of 1734, he dictated the first book ever written in Johnsonese, a translation of Lobo's *Voyage to Abyssinia.* In 1735 he was proposed by an influential friend for the mastership of a small grammar school, but the "faces" that Johnson habitually made (probably nervous contortions due to his disorder) so alarmed the trustees that they felt debarred from engaging "so good a schollar." These same twitchings lost him a similar post in 1736.

The years following his marriage, 1737-47, when the *Dictionary* was planned, form the most cheerless section of Johnson's life. For a short time upon the products of his wife's dowry he set up a small school at Edial, near



FROM THE PAINTING BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

SAMUEL JOHNSON

Lichfield, where he had for his pupils the two sons of a half-pay officer of his native town, named Garrick, and one or two others. Judging by the example of his later years, when he was not living from hand to mouth, he probably took things fairly easily. At any rate the school was a failure, and, in 1737, Johnson set out to London in the company of David Garrick with a few guineas, three acts of the tragedy of *Irene* in manuscript, and two or three letters of introduction in his pocket, leaving his wife to follow next year.

Such occupation as was open to the professional "hackney" was soon obtained by Johnson. From 1738 he was employed by Edward Cave upon *The Gentleman's Magazine,* a sapless periodical then seven years old. One of his chief tasks was the compilation from rough notes supplied by Cave of the parliamentary debates. The idea was to supply "the essence of Parliament," but as direct reporting was forbidden the speakers were introduced under transparent nicknames as Senators of Lilliput. Where the notes were defective Johnson drew upon his own imagination, taking care, as he afterwards declared, "that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it." In this same year (1738) he got £10 for his poem *London,* in imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal, a gloomy but powerful variation in declamatory verse upon the theme, "Slow rises Worth by Poverty depressed." Pope prophesied that the author would soon be *déterré;* ten years later the poem was praised by Gray as one of the few imitations which renew the ease and spirit of an original. In the meantime, however, Johnson was occupied upon translations, and even less remunerative work. He wrote sermons, prefaces, and advertisements, and compiled indexes, living at the rate of five-pence a day, visiting his patrons on clean-shirt days, but frequently so shabby that he could not appear in public at all. Osborne, the bookseller, had

the temerity to reprove him for some negligence in preparing a catalogue of the Harleian Library, and was knocked down by the offended scholar with a folio Septuagint. "I have beat many a fellow," said the great man afterwards to Mrs. Piozzi, "but the rest had the wit to hold their tongues." In 1744 he wrote off at a white heat his powerful though erroneous *Life of Richard Savage,* a scamp whose talent was threadbare enough, but whose wide experience of life had gained him the ear and the sympathy of Johnson, ever ready to listen to a tale of distress. *The Life of Savage* contributed greatly to extend Johnson's reputation. He was one day sitting in Robert Dodsley's shop when that bookseller took occasion to observe that a dictionary of the English language would be a work that would be well received by the public. Johnson caught at the idea, but after a pause said, "I believe I shall not undertake it." He had, however, pondered such a work, and Dodsley's suggestion probably clinched the matter. The bookseller induced him, in 1747, to address a scheme or "Plan" of the dictionary to Lord Chesterfield, then Secretary of State and the contemporary Mæcenas. The payment of the work was undertaken by a combination of booksellers. Johnson was to receive a sum of £1,575, out of which he had to pay several amanuenses. Asked by Dr. Adams how he expected to finish such a work in three years, while the French Academy of forty had taken forty years to compile their dictionary, Johnson replied jocularly, "Sir, thus it is: this is the proportion; forty times forty is 1,600. As three to 1,600, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman." It took five or six men the best part of eight years before the Dictionary was complete. In the meantime, in January, 1749, appeared his second poem, *The Vanity of Human Wishes,* a poem more sincere in its melancholy than its predecessor, an exercise greatly admired by Scott and by Byron, em-

bodying as it does a stoical dignity so truly profound and touching that it may well claim to inscribe the veritable "mottoes of the human heart." The same year saw the production of Johnson's tragedy, *Irene* (which had been refused in 1738), at Drury Lane, through the kind offices of his friend Garrick. The players' zeal procured for *Irene* a better reception than it deserved (it ran for nine evenings). Apart from its frigidity and its lack of dramatic interest, the blank verse in which it is composed is execrably bad, speaking volumes as to Johnson's subsequent judgments upon pre-Drydenian verse. The great lexicographer probably cherished some illusions about his early tragedy, but when asked how he felt upon his ill success, replied "Like the Monument." In later years, when some passages were read from it he left the room, and subsequently remarked that "he did not think it had been so bad."

In March, 1750, when the *Dictionary* was in midcourse, Johnson commenced his periodical, *The Rambler,* which continued to appear at the price of twopence every Thursday and Saturday, down to March, 1752. A few days after the appearance of the last number, Mrs. Johnson died. He took up a similar periodical, *The Idler,* in 1758-60. Between the two, and his contribution to *The Adventurer* of his old associate Hawkesworth, Johnson must have written fully three hundred of the ponderous essays popular at that day. Their pleasantries recall Johnson's description of Burke's attempts at humour as those of "a beetle in the mire." The women characters, as Garrick said, were all "Johnsons in petticoats," and the hard words so numerous that the style was said to be designed to prepare the way for the great *Dictionary.* This epoch-making work, our standard English dictionary for over a century, appeared in 1755. The same year witnessed the manly reproof which he administered to Lord Chester-

field in his memorable "Letter." But Johnson was no better off for the work which had made him famous. He was tired and indolent; he preferred "poverty and the pride of literature" to any fresh enterprise involving toil. He fell into extreme indigence and was more than once arrested for debt. In 1759 his mother died, and during the evenings of a single week he threw off *Rasselas,* a long "Rambler" tricked out in the setting of an Oriental novel (somewhat after the manner of the Oriental tales of which Voltaire had caught the idea from Swift), in order to defray her debts and pay the expenses of her funeral. The release from his worst period of bondage was now at hand. In 1762 he received his pension of £300 a year from George III.; next year he made the acquaintance of Boswell; "the club" was formed in 1764, and in 1765 he made the acquaintance of Mr. Thrale, a rich brewer with a comfortable villa at Streatham, where a room was always prepared for him. From Gough Square to Staple Inn, from Staple Inn to Inner Temple Lane, Johnson now made his last move to a gloomy house in Bolt Court, where he retained a *pied-à-terre* for himself and his books, and his negro servant Francis; while the larger part of the house was devoted to his poor pensioners, Miss Williams, Mrs. Desmoulins, Miss Carmichael, Dr. Levett, and his pampered cat "Hodge."

His own time he consecrated more and more to strenuous talk, to the cultivation of his friends, to club-life and to travel; revisiting with increasing fondness his old college at Oxford, the house of his old school-friend, Dr. Taylor, at Ashbourne, and his early haunts at Lichfield. Henceforth we trace his life along the stream of his talk recorded by Boswell in his inimitable pages. It is but too plain that a marked coldness supervened during the autumn of 1784, owing, probably, to Johnson's intolerance of Bozzy's valetudinarian lamentations, which prevented

them seeing more of each other until Johnson's death on December 13th. He was seventy-five at the time of his death, which produced an immense sensation in England. He was buried in the Abbey on December 20th, 1784, and among his pall-bearers were Burke, Windham, and Sir Joseph Banks.

"The names of many great writers are inscribed upon the walls of Westminster Abbey," says Sir Leslie Stephen, "but scarcely any one lies there whose heart was more acutely responsive during life to the deepest and tenderest of human emotions. . . . There are many whose words and deeds have a far greater influence upon our imaginations; but there are very few, when all has been said, whom we can love so heartily as Samuel Johnson."

Externally, Johnson must appear to have been a slovenly, dirty, and in many ways repulsive-mannered man. He suffered from melancholia, which bordered at times almost upon madness; he was very subject to irritable ebullitions, and was often offensively overbearing, passionate, harsh, and dictatorial in company. These offensive habits, whether of mind or person, were traceable almost entirely either to his early poverty or his mental affliction, and did not prevent him ruling with an agreeable sway a numerous society of well-bred people, by whom he was cultivated for the stimulus which his wit and wisdom never failed to supply. Such an inveterate hater of sham sympathy and sentimentality was Johnson that many of his sayings have a rough and uncompromising sound. But practically he was the most beneficent of men. To the poor he was generosity itself. A profound compassion was the deepest fibre of that noble and courageous nature. The example that he set, the friendships that he made, the good things that he said, outweighed the importance of his literary influence or of his actual writings, considerable though these were.

When Johnson obtained his pension in 1762 he had already achieved a position as a species of dictator of the literary republic of the metropolis. As poet and scholar, as grammarian and moral essayist, and still more perhaps by his well-known versatility as an occasional writer; by his reserve power, and by his value as a literary consultant, he had obtained a unique position among professional writers of the day, though it was generally recognised that he had achieved nothing fully commensurate with his powers. Henceforth composition became increasingly irksome to him; he had written extraordinarily well under pressure, but now that the pressure was removed he tried to evade writing altogether, and all the writing that he was induced to do was undertaken under conditions involving an application of something resembling the old stimulus as closely as might be. In 1765 he was forced by shame into producing the edition of Shakespeare for which he had issued proposals and taken subscriptions nine years earlier. Done, as it was, at a white heat, his preface forms one of the most vigorous essays that ever came from his pen. In 1774 he produced a fairly vivacious account of his *Journey to the Hebrides.* Three years later a syndicate of booksellers which had resolved upon an elaborate edition of the English Poets, sent a deputation to him requesting that he would furnish a short life of each poet upon his own terms. He was delighted with the proposal, and named two hundred guineas as the price. The scheme expanded under his hands, and much of it was accomplished in a very hasty, irregular, and unequal fashion. In this way it occupied him nearly four years, and he was eventually paid four hundred guineas. The *Lives* were written at a happy hour, when Johnson had receded most from the pompousness of his verbose period (that of *The Rambler*), and before his health or mental powers had begun to show any signs of abatement. The *Lives* were

FROM THE PAINTING BY E. M. WARD, R.A.

DOCTOR JOHNSON WAITING FOR AN AUDIENCE WITH LORD CHESTERFIELD

an immense success, and soon became as popular as they have almost ever since continued to be. No critical work in our language, perhaps, shows more native vigour than the *Lives of the Poets;* no book contains so many sound and original canons of criticism. Johnson was by no means satisfied by the impressionistic method, and of those writers into whose pretensions he went at all deeply, he sought to give a motived and authoritative criticism. That he undervalued the musical and imaginative qualities in poetry can hardly be denied, and his estimates of the early poems of Milton and of the odes of Collins and Gray are aggressively depreciatory; but he demanded of poetry primarily that it should be sensible, not that it should sing. All good poetry, he held, could be turned into good prose; except for metre and rhyme, he saw no distinction between the two. In matters of poetical taste, he was faithful to the ideals of Dryden and Pope, and never really got beyond them. But we must be on our guard against interpreting the views expressed in the *Lives* too seriously as a final expression of Johnson's poetical creed. Biography was his favourite study, but it had its irksome side, and he did not intend that the booksellers (he knew the dogs well) should get too much the best of their bargain. He said that it was useless to criticise what nobody reads. Nevertheless, he wrote judicial memoirs of Stepney, Duke, Sprat, King, Hughes, Blackmore, Fenton, Hammond, Broome, West, Mallet, and Lyttelton. If the details were handy, well and good. If not, he was quite prepared to supply their place with his own shrewd reflections and sombre philosophy of living and dying. George III. suggested that Spenser might be included among the beadroll of our "English Poets." But Johnson himself could only be brought to recommend for inclusion Blackmore, Pomfret, Yalden, and Watts. To such poetasters he was ever indulgent. He kept his thunders for Milton and

Gray. Thus, after belabouring *Lycidas,* fist and cudgel, he solemnly takes up his quill to put on record the fact that Rowe's translation of Lucan is "one of the greatest productions of English poetry." It is true that some of the best Lives, such as those of Milton, Cowley, Dryden, and Pope, elicited Johnson's best powers; but he can have never thought of expending upon these "notices" either the profound thought or the careful revision which a systematic treatise on English poetry would require. He was already an old man when he undertook it, and had an established reputation which had little to gain by the promulgation of new views or the shedding of old prejudices.

When Shakespeare wrote he dipped his pen in his heart; "when Johnson writes tragedy," as Garrick said, "declamation roars and passion sleeps," and when we turn to his other writings, with one or two exceptions we shall find that they have the one fault that comprises all others: they are alike unreadable. They are sententious, polysyllabic, but, above all, commonplace. That life is short, that marriages from mercenary motives produce unhappiness, that different men are virtuous in different degrees, that advice is generally ineffectual, that adversity has its uses, that fame is liable to suffer from detraction—these are the maxims which Dr. Johnson, whether he was "Rambling," or "Idling," sought, not once or twice, to inculcate upon his fellow-mortals. He was not himself unconscious of his tendency to use too big words and too many of them, and he managed to subdue it, to a great extent, in his *Lives of the Poets,* as he had done with relative success in his nearest approach to a work of art, the poem on *The Vanity of Human Wishes.* But it is not primarily as an artist that Johnson impresses us. Is it then as a great thinker? Of the wisdom that consists of applying the touch-stone of common sense to every

subject of converse it can hardly be denied that Johnson was a great master. And, so far as this goes, he was no doubt a philosopher. But as a systematic thinker, he could hardly be rated at all. When his massive intellect could be brought to bear upon the problems of history, law, metaphysics, or even physical science, however rugged they might be, it could hardly fail to make an impression. But he addressed himself to such problems with the greatest reluctance. Biography, literary criticism, personal gossip —these were his themes; for ancient history and philosophy he cared less and less—such subjects had no actuality for him, and so, with regard to metaphysics. We have only to compare Johnson with a contemporary like Rousseau, to recognise how extraordinarily circumscribed was his influence as a thinker. Practically none of Johnson's works have been translated, and even Boswell's *Life* is unknown abroad. In Church and State matters, Johnson was just a typical Englishman, a creature of compromise and of slow incrustations, while, by instinct and personal inclination, he was, at the same time, a thoroughgoing individualist.

As an artist, then, Johnson did not fully succeed in realising himself; as a thinker, his influence was extremely circumscribed, his horizon moreover was narrow, and he was out of touch with the greater part of the most stimulating thought of his own singularly fertile period. But it is not in either of these capacities that he really impresses us: it is as a man; a man of the world, too, who combined with a gloomy and ineradicable melancholy, and a profound sympathy for the sorrows and sufferings of his fellows, a singularly masculine and fleshy wit.

It is mainly in the right of his large humanity and this same conspicuous wit that Dr. Johnson takes rank with the great names of his generation, even if he does not fully justify the claim of his biographer that he was "the

brightest ornament of the eighteenth century." His influence is harder to summarise and to define than that of any of the others. For it was not exerted by Johnson directly as an artist or as a thinker: yet it was exercised more directly perhaps than the influence of any of the others, through the medium of literature in the largest sense, and in ultimate effect it may prove to be the most powerful and most penetrating of them all.[1]

"Such was Johnson's Life: the victorious Battle of a true Man. Finally he died the death of the free and true: a dark cloud of Death, solemn and not untinged with haloes of immortal Hope, 'took him away,' and our eyes could no longer behold him; but can still behold the trace and impress of his courageous, honest spirit, deep-legible in the World's Business, wheresoever he walked and was."

[1] Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, "the life of a mountebank and his zany," as Walpole called it, first published in May, 1791, does what is done in a greater degree perhaps by some sacred books, and in a lesser degree by Pepys, by Rousseau, and by Borrow—it transmits a personality—the heart of the secret in literature. Among professional authors Johnson will always be held in highest honour: for is he not one of the victorious champions of the dignity of the craft and mystery of letters? Wherever literature is well esteemed his famous letter to Chesterfield shall never be read without a glow of generous enthusiasm. Together with Milton's *Areopagitica*, Hood's *Epistle to Rae Wilson*, and *Stockdale* v. *Hansard*, it is one of the title-deeds of English Letters.

"*Feb. 7th, 1755.*

"My Lord,—I have been lately informed by the proprietor of the *World*, that two papers, in which my *Dictionary* is recommended to the public, were written by your lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

"When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the

enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

"Seven years, my lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

"The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

"Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

"Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long awakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my lord,

"Your lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

"SAM JOHNSON."

To James Boswell of Auchinlech (1740—1795) Samuel Johnson's debt is incalculable: for to the *Anecdotes* (1785) of Mrs. Piozzi (formerly Thrale), and the *Life of Johnson* (1787) by Sir John Hawkins, "Bozzy" is as Renan is to Farrar. This incredible product of Edinburgh High School and Univer-

sity, when the century was at its meridian, born traveller, dilettante, gossip, cicisbeo, quidnunc, sycophant, man about town and society journalist, Boswell first met Johnson in Tom Davies's back parlour on May 16th, 1763 (it was on May 16th, just twenty-eight years later, that the immortal *Life* appeared). To the notorieties of his day Boswell attached himself with a glutinous adhesiveness. He initiated autograph hunting. He had the colossal impertinence to ask Lord Chatham to "honour him with a letter now and then." Such vagaries led even sound Johnsonians like Crocker, Macaulay, and Carlyle to treat him respectively as an idiot, a fribble, and a mere fool. Dissipated, drunken, and vain as he was, with a large portion of Sterne's semi-hysterical sensibility, there is equally no doubt that Boswell was a very great writer, an Aubrey and Pepys in one, a pioneer in the portrayal of literary personality, such an artist in reporting that we cannot displace a single word without manifest loss: in a word, the author of the liveliest biography on record. The editions of Boswell's *chef d'œuvre* are as follows: Malone's four editions (1799, 1804, 1807, 1811); Chalmers (1822); Oxford (1826); Crocker's three (1831, 1835, 1848); Carruthers' (1852); Fitzgerald's (1875 and 1888); A. Napier's (1884); Dr. Birkbeck Hill's (the fullest and best, 6 vols., 1887)*; the Globe (1893); Mr. Birrell's (1900); abridged by Roger Ingpen, with useful notes (in Hutchinson's Standard Shilling Biographies, 1906). See also Percy Fitzgerald's agreeable gossipy *Life of Boswell*, Stephen's *Johnson* (Men of Letters), Seccombe's *Age of Johnson*. The writers are indebted to Mr. H. Spencer Scott and Mr. Henry Davey for suggestions.

CHAPTER VIII

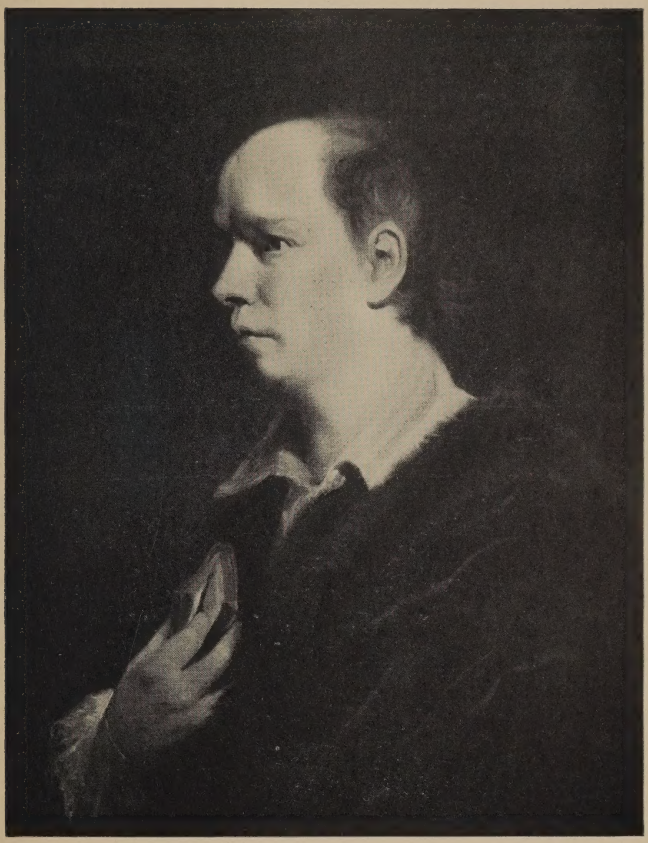
OLIVER GOLDSMITH AND R. B. SHERIDAN

"It is not to be described,—the effect that Goldsmith's *Vicar* had upon me, just at the critical moment of mental development. That lofty and benevolent irony, that fair and indulgent view of all infirmities and faults, that meekness under all calamities, that equanimity under all changes and chances, and the whole train of kindred virtues, whatever names they bear, proved my best education."—GOETHE.

Goldsmith's Life—*The Critical Review*—"The Citizen of the World"—Goldsmith's Poems and Plays—*Retaliation*—*The Vicar of Wakefield*—Sheridan's Comedies.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH, born at Pallasmore, County Longford, on November 10th, 1728, was the fifth of the numerous children of Charles Goldsmith, who was parson of Pallas, and in 1730 became rector of Kilkenny West. The family income was raised by this change from £40 to nearly £200, and the Goldsmiths moved from a parsonage that resembled a cottage to one that more nearly approached a farmhouse in the neighbourhood of Lissoy ("Sweet Auburn"). Oliver was taught at the village school, at a larger school at Elphin, and in 1739 was sent to a better school at Athlone. Finally he was transferred to Edgeworthstown, and at all these schools, until he was about sixteen and his muscles began to develop, Oliver was laughed at for his ugliness and his uncouth manner. In June, 1744, he obtained a sizarship at Trinity College, Dublin, where he took his degree of B. A. on February 27th, 1749. Oliver now spent three years in idleness at the college of Ballymahon, whither his mother had retired

after his father's death. In 1751 the time was ripe for Oliver to make application to the Bishop of Elphin for orders. Whether as a protest against unseemly attire (scarlet breeches are alleged) or the applicant's profound ignorance of divinity, his application was refused. Oliver, in no way dismayed, but encouraged rather by his uncle Contarine, was now sent out to commence life as a tutor. He obtained a good appointment, but the harmony of the family was disturbed (as one would expect to find in County Galway as described by Charles Lever), by disagreements as to cards between the tutor and his pupil. Subsequently he set out to America, but got no farther than Cork; and started for the Temple with fifty pounds, but got no farther than Roscommon, whence he returned with four and twopence. One learned profession still remained. It was determined to make a doctor of Oliver. The family oracle, Dean Goldsmith of Cloyne, was consulted, and gave it as his opinion to Mr. Contarine that "his young relative would make an excellent medical man." He got to Edinburgh this time, and during 1753 we have some fascinating letters from him to his uncle, written with a purity and simplicity of style which were hereafter to make him famous. At the end of the year he drew a final twenty pounds from his uncle, and set out for Leyden, where he soon seems to have forgotten all about his medical degree. In February, 1755, he left Leyden with a guinea in his pocket, and practically no luggage save his flute. He travelled on foot through the Low Countries and France, begging his way from village to village with the aid of a trifling skill in music, and in Italy a "pretty skill in disputation." Hence Boswell's saying to Johnson, "Sir, he disputed his passage through Europe." On February 1st, 1756, he landed at Dover. For a time after his arrival in London he appears to have been almost starved, and lived, as he once astonished well-



FROM THE PAINTING BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

to-do friends by observing, "among the beggars in Axe Lane." Afterwards he was a druggist's assistant, and a humble practitioner in Bankside, Southwark. For a time he was described as corrector for the press in Richardson's office, and in 1757 he became usher to Dr. Milner at the Peckham Academy. He was still in this capacity in April, 1757, when Ralph Griffiths, the bookseller and founder of *The Monthly Review,* met him and tempted him to send in a few specimens of criticisms for his paper. The specimens were so satisfactory that Goldsmith was further tempted to leave Peckham and to become one of Griffiths's regular hands at a fixed salary. Among his earliest reviews for *The Monthly* were those on Mallet's *Remains of Scandinavian Poetry,* Home's *Douglas: a Tragedy,* and Wilkie's *Epigoniad.* He also reviewed with remarkable fairness the English history of Smollett, editor of *The Monthly's* successful rival, *The Critical Review,* which Smollett had started as a Tory monthly in 1756. A half-year had scarcely elapsed in this kind of work before Griffiths and his reviewer were mutually dissatisfied. Thrown upon his own resources again, Goldsmith attempted some translations, and may have written for other periodicals than *The Monthly.* But he was alarmed at such a precarious method of life, and was reduced finally to knock once more at Dr. Milner's door at Peckham. He stayed there as usher another nine or ten months. Milner was more than kind in taking Goldsmith once more under his roof. He was sufficiently interested in him to obtain a nomination for his appointment as medical officer to an English factory on the coast of Coromandel at a salary of a hundred a year, apart from the private practice attached to it. How he lost this appointment is not quite clear, but almost certainly owing to some failure on his own part to comply with the preliminary conditions. In the meantime he had already recommenced relations with

Griffiths, who became a security with a tailor for a new suit of clothes which Goldsmith needed in order to present himself as candidate at Surgeons' Hall for a post as a hospital mate in the navy. An examination was held on December 28th, 1758, when Goldsmith duly presented himself, and was one of the few who were found not qualified.

In the early months of 1759 Goldsmith did a good deal of work for Smollett on *The Critical Review,* reviewing among other books the *Miscellanies* of Montesquieu and the *Remains* of Samuel Butler; and in April the Dodsleys printed the first book which gave him a status as an individual author, *An Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe.* Goldsmith's essay was a pleasant and somewhat sophistical attempt to feel the pulse of the professional writer and to give publicity to his griefs at a time when he certainly had a good deal to complain of. The booksellers were not unnaturally indignant at Goldsmith's attempt to extenuate rather than to justify the nature of their commerce, yet the essay seems to have extended his connection among them, and in October, 1759, the Inquirer into the Polite Learning of Europe commenced for a bookseller of St. Paul's a weekly magazine adapted to the prevailing taste of England at the moment. It was issued every Saturday, price threepence, and was called *The Bee.* He filled up his time by writing for *The Busybody* and *The Lady's Magazine,* which was intended as a prop and advertising agent for *The Bee. The Bee* itself was not destined to survive its eighth number, but its essays were deemed worthy of republication, and the competence shown by the essayist in the Addisonian line marked him out as a man to be secured by Smollett for the sixpenny magazine which he launched on New Year's Day, 1760, as *The British Magazine, or Monthly Repository.* Within twelve days of Smollett's

magazine, Newberry, the prosperous St. Paul's bookseller, started his daily *Public Ledger,* for which Goldsmith's services were similarly secured at the rate of a guinea per article. It was for this paper that he made his first great hit with "The Chinese Letters," as they soon came to be called, describing the reflections contained in letters of a Chinese philosopher resident in London to his friends at home. Ninety-eight letters appeared in all and contributed more than anything else to the success of *The Ledger.*[1] The idea of the letters was borrowed from the *Lettres Persanes* of Montesquieu and such collections as *The Turkish Spy,* but the beautiful facility of their style and humour makes them very characteristic of Goldsmith. Their success rendered Goldsmith indispensable to Newbery, who financed the essayist henceforth upon terms which were perhaps on the whole beneficial to both. Goldsmith moved his lodgings from Green Arbour to Wine Office Court, where Newbery had him under command for all kinds of miscellaneous work and paid him at the rate of not much less than £4 a week. In 1762 Newbery published the "Citizen of the World" letters in a completed form, giving the author 5 guineas for the new copyright. In the same year Goldsmith went to Bath, bringing back materials for his Life of Beau Nash. He was already apparently known to Dr. Johnson, by whom he was introduced to Reynolds, and Goldsmith now removed from the City to board with Mrs. Fleming at £50 pounds a year in the then pleasantly suburban neighbourhood of Canonbury. From 1764 Goldsmith was a regular attend-

[1] Even more famous in the estimation of posterity have proved the essays he wrote for Smollett, including the best essay written in English before 1820—to wit, the *Reverie at the Boar's Head Tavern, East Cheap.* Both Lamb and Washington Irving frankly confessed their obligations to Goldsmith. The author's preface to these collected essays is a masterpiece of genial humor.

ant at the club which met at the Turk's Head in Gerrard Street, at which he with Johnson, Reynolds, Burke, Langton, Beauclerk, and Sir John Hawkins were original members, and to the same year belongs the famous story of the sale of the manuscript of *The Vicar of Wakefield* and his rescue from the clutches of the wrathful Mrs. Fleming through the intervention of Johnson. At the very time of Goldsmith's arrest not only *The Vicar of Wakefield* but also a poem called *The Traveller* lay completed in the poet's desk. This poem was published by Newbery at one and sixpence on December 19th, 1764. Its smooth and carefully elaborated couplets won the hearty applause of the town and the just comment that the poem had had no equal since the death of Pope.[1] The author had done now with Islington and Mrs. Fleming. He moved to the Temple and took advantage of his new popularity to collect his essays from *The Bee* and other periodicals. His price was rapidly going up in the market, as we may judge from the fact that Newbery paid him £60 for a *Survey of Experimental Philosophy,* and no less than £200 for some red-pencil work upon the beauties of English poetry. In a very different category from all this task-work was the exquisite novel which Goldsmith had cherished from its conception and upon the workmanship of which he had lavished all the treasures of his skill. During the whole of 1765 this masterpiece

[1] As in the "Moral Essays" of Pope it is the beauty and perfection of individual lines that take the reader by storm: descriptions of France and the French character such as that beginning:

> Gay, sprightly land of mirth and social ease,
> Pleased with thyself whom all the world can please;

or the wonderful delineation of Holland from

> Where the broad ocean leans against the land.

had lain neglected in Newbery's shop. On March 27th, 1766, or fifteen months after *The Traveller* had appeared, was published, at six shillings bound or five shillings sewed, "*The Vicar of Wakefield,* a Tale, supposed to be written by Himself; printed for F. Newbery at the Crown in Paternoster Row." Several minute circumstances show that the book was largely written in 1762, though not completed until two years later. Burke stood almost alone among the connoisseurs of the time in according a high rank to this Prince Charming among works of prose fiction, but its popularity among the public was great from the first. But none of the work that he did for posterity seemed to pay, and to support his rapidly increasing expenses Goldsmith had to pull hard at the compiler's oar for the publishers with whom his name was a steadily improving asset. In addition to Roman and English histories he was set to work upon a large natural history, which was eventually called *Animated Nature,* in which he described how monkeys caught crabs by baiting their tails and drawing their prey from the water by means of a violent jerk. If his paymasters had but allowed, he would have surpassed himself in a companion work on the vegetable and fossil creation. All this hack-work derives whatever merit it possesses from the inalienable charm of Goldsmith's style. Fortunately he found some intervals for more permanent work, and in the retirement of the turret of Canonbury House during the spring of 1767 he composed his comedy, *The Good-Natured Man.* The piece was refused by Garrick at Drury Lane, but was taken by Coleman of Covent Garden and produced at the end of January, 1768. Goldsmith's friends attended in force and the play was a success, though Goldsmith's vanity was hurt by the lack of cordiality shown by a public, which reserved its enthusiasm for a rival comedy, *The False Delicacy* of Hugh Kelly. The happy author got

£500, and it is now that we hear of Mr. Filby's great creation of a poet's Tyrian bloom-coloured coat, and of ugly Noll's dancing on the table and throwing his wig about at supper-parties in the Temple, while the unhappy Blackstone groaned below over the proof-sheets of the *Commentaries.*

The next triumph of Goldsmith's genius was *The Deserted Village,* published May 26th, 1770, the result of much labour, and a poetical exercise so perfect in its kind that it elicited from the reluctant Gray the sentence, "This man is a poet." The success of the poem was instant and decisive, and five editions followed each other in as many months. For the 430 verses in the poem he is said to have been paid at the rate of ten shillings a couplet. The success largely added to Goldsmith's social importance and to the frequency of his engagements in Leicester Square, Vauxhall, Bath, and such haunts of the *beau monde.* Periodically, however, he retired to a farm near the sixth milestone on the Edgeware road for uninterrupted work. There during 1771 he wrote his delightful comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer,* and there probably, after returning from a visit to Lord Clare at Bath in 1771, he threw off that wittiest and most festive of poetical epistles to his late host commencing:

> Thanks, my lord, for your venison, for finer or fatter
> Never ranged in a forest, or smoked in a platter.

The comedy was submitted to Coleman early in 1772, but the manager dallied with it a whole year before he could conquer his misgiving as to the fate of a comedy which was so broadly humorous and laughable. Johnson, to whom the play was inscribed, presided over a large muster of the poet's friends, and led the applause from the front row in the side box. The play was received with

hearty shouts of laughter and applause; as Johnson said it answered the great end of comedy, making an audience merry. Coleman was dumbfounded, and the refined school, as represented by Horace Walpole, had to admit a prodigious success. It must have brought in Goldsmith £600, or possibly more. But his finances were past such remedy. He had raised money and squandered it by every artifice of acquisition and folly of expense. He suffered the torments known only to those who accept payment in advance for work that they have not done. He had cherished the hope of retrieving his position by means of a large scheme for a popular dictionary of arts and sciences; but the booksellers had now, we are told, such acquaintance of his indolence of temper and methods of procrastination that they ultimately fought shy of the project. His alternative plans included abridgments of his former works, translations from Scarron, a new edition of his *Inquiry,* and similar tasks. In the meantime, he followed up his previous happy attempts at occasional verse by his masterly *Retaliation,* in answer to some mock epitaphs composed by Garrick and others at a dinner-party of his acquaintances at the St. James's Coffee-house. Poor Goldsmith's own epitaph was the first to be needed. In the middle of March, 1774, he returned from his country retreat feeling far from well. On March 25th he was too ill to attend the club, and, in spite of the protests of the doctors summoned, insisted on dosing himself with James's powders, the fashionable febrifuge of the period. On April 3rd he obtained the long-desired sleep, and it was thought that his malady had taken a turn for the better; but next morning he woke up in convulsions, sank rapidly, and died before five in the morning, being then forty-five and a half years old.

When Burke was told of his death he burst into tears; Reynolds gave over painting for the day; Johnson was

no less deeply affected. "Sir Joshua is of opinion," says Johnson, "that he owed not less than £2,000." Was ever poet so trusted before? In the circumstances the public funeral proposed was abandoned, and he was buried on April 9th in the burial-ground of the Temple Church, where a flat stone was placed to mark his grave in 1874. A monument was erected in Westminster Abbey over the south door in Poets' Corner at the expense of the Club.

Goldsmith had neither the gift of knowledge nor the power of research. As an essayist and poet, he has neither extended views nor originality; as a critic upon the few occasions upon which he embarks on criticism, his sympathies are of the most restricted kind. Of Shakespeare and Milton he knew very little, and cared less. His interest in poetry commenced with Dryden and ended with Pope; while in prose his great models were Addison and Voltaire. His own success as a writer was due to an instinctive good taste in style, which led him unerringly to the perfection of clearness, simplicity, and easy, graceful fluency. The same qualities are visible alike in essays, poems, novels, and plays. The ideas are not even those of his own day. They are those of a Tory squire of the reign of Queene Anne, of a close relative of Sir Roger De Coverley; but they are adorned at every turn by a genial air of Bohemian reminiscence, by a twinkle of boyish humour, and by a delicate and most rare gift for perceiving and expressing with the most wonderful idealising touch all that is most actual and most commonplace. It is hardly an exaggeration to say in fact that, with the exception of a few pictures drawn from his early life and experience, all Goldsmith's themes are trite and commonplace in the extreme. Had his notes and materials been worked up by any other hand, they would have been quite worthless. Goldsmith's playful and delicate touch alone could transform every thought that he handled into something radiant

with warmth and fragrant with a perfume all its own. The incoherence of his life seems completely reversed in the beautiful coherence of his writings.

Goldsmith's essays and plays are a delightful compound of fun and felicity and happy unconscious art upon a background of tavern stories and droll experiences of his callow hobbledehoyhood in Ireland; and we have the same qualities joined to a more exquisite sensibility in what is, after all, his great masterpiece, the inimitable *Vicar of Wakefield*—one of the greatest compliments to human nature that an Englishman has ever produced. The excellences of this work, like that of most others by this author, are of the episodical kind, and seem injured rather than enhanced by the operation of the intrigue; but the earlier chapters, as Macaulay says in his most bland appreciation, have all the sweetness of pastoral poetry, together with all the vivacity of comedy. Moses and his gross of green spectacles, the vicar and his monogamy, the sharper and his cosmogony, the picture too big to be got out of the kitchen, the squire proving from Aristole that relatives are related, Olivia preparing herself for the arduous task of converting a rakish lover by studying the controversy between Robinson Crusoe and Friday, the great pseudo-ladies with their scandal about Sir Tomkyn's amours and Mr. Burchell with his "Fudge," have caused as much harmless mirth as has ever been caused by matter packed into so small a number of pages. The latter part of the tale is unworthy of the beginning. As we approach the catastrophe the absurdities lie thicker and thicker, and the gleams of pleasantry become rarer and rarer. We read the Vicar of Wakefield in youth and in age. We return to it again and again, and bless the memory of an author who contrives so well to reconcile us to human nature.

As a man of letters Sheridan is hardly worthy to as-

sociate with Goldsmith. He had none of Goldy's artless humanity or spontaneous humour; but that he wrote the best comedies we have had since "the matchless Congreve" is still, we believe, undisputed. Like Goldsmith himself, and Foote, and Oscar Wilde, and Charles Lever, whose novels are a tissue of farces, Richard Brinsley Butler Sheridan was a true scion of Anglo-Irish sires. Ability and buoyancy, thriftlessness and improvidence, seemed singularly balanced in his composition. His grandfather united improvidence and wit strangely in electing to preach at Cork upon the solemn occasion of George I.'s birthday from the text "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof"! His father was the rival lexicographer and "preternaturally dull" contemporary of Dr. Johnson. "When they give *him* a pension," said Ursa Major, "it is time for me to give up mine." Born at 12, Dorset Street, Dublin, on October 30th, 1751 (the year of *Amelia, Pickle,* and Gray's *Elegy*), Richard, at first and at Harrow, seemed likely to prove "preternaturally dull"; but at twenty-two he was clever enough to walk off with the belle of the Bath season, and with her a dot of £3,000 provided by the sentimental tenderness of a baffled elderly admirer. Sheridan invested the money in a West-End house and entertainments worthy of his sparkling talent for conversation, and in January, 1775, his precocity of wit was amply vindicated by the triumphant success at Covent Garden of his first comedy, *The Rivals.* The rivals are one and the same person. The gallant young lover has introduced himself to the romantic heroine in the character of Ensign Beverley, a poor young subaltern, in preference to his own more eligible personality as the heir of Sir Anthony Absolute, a baronet with £4,000 a year, and has gained the heart of the sentimental Lydia, who prefers love in a cottage to the finest settlements, and looks forward to an elopement and the loss of a great part of her fortune with

FROM THE PAINTING BY W. P. FRITH

THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD

delight; but the young man's plans are confounded by the sudden arrival upon the scene of his father, bent upon marrying him forthwith in his own person to the aforesaid Lydia. Thus he is at the same time in her eyes the romantic and adored Beverley and the detested Captain Absolute, the wealthy suitor to whom she has been bartered by her guardians. Such is the airy complication upon which this famous comedy is hung.

Sheridan had no truck with the dramatic theories of his day, and from the artistic or constructive side his work is a mere réchauffé of Vanbrugh, with numerous hints from the novelist, especially the author of *Humphry Clinker*. But in such a play as the *Rivals* what matters is the ingenious dialogue and the highly perfected wit that it enshrines.

Sir Anthony Absolute. In my way hither, Mrs. Malaprop, I observed your niece's maid coming forth from a circulating library!—She had a book in each hand—they were half-bound volumes, with marble covers!—From that moment I guessed how full of duty I should see her mistress!

Mrs. Malaprop. Those are vile places, indeed!

Sir Anthony. Madam, a circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge! It blossoms through the year!—and depend on it, Mrs. Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves, will long for the fruit at last.

Mrs. Malaprop. Fy, fy, Sir Anthony!—you surely speak laconically.

Sir Anthony. Why, Mrs. Malaprop, in moderation now, what would you have a woman know?

Mrs. Malaprop. Observe me, Sir Anthony. I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning; I don't think so much learning becomes a young woman; for instance, I would never let her meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or algebra, or simony, or fluxions, or paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of learning—neither would it be necessary for her to handle any of your mathematical, astronomical, diabolical instruments.—But, Sir Anthony, I would send her, at

nine years old, to a boarding-school, in order to learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts;—and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries;—but above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not mis-spell, and mis-pronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying. This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a woman know;—and I don't think there is a superstitious article in it.

Sheridan's next attempts at farce and comic opera in *St. Patrick's Day, or The Scheming Lieutenant,* and *The Duenna* have nothing very particular to recommend them beyond a few songs; but with *The School for Scandal* it is far otherwise. The comedy is Sheridan's own incomparably successful repartee to the saying that he was afraid of himself. It is undoubtedly Sheridan at his highest power. The plot is not pre-eminently original and the characters are certainly overdrawn. Lady Sneerwell sneers a little too much, Joseph Surface is a little too sleek, Uncle Oliver a little too avuncular, and Charles Surface a little too breezy for life; but the characters and situations are perfect for the stage. Sheridan's comedy is the acme of artificial comedy, and artificial comedy has always been a law unto itself. Observe merely that the dialogue which was so desperately hard to write is the most delightfully easy to read in the whole range of modern drama.

The most humorous and spontaneous thing that ever Sheridan wrote, by far, is *The Critic,* given at Drury Lane in October, 1779, two-and-a-half years after *The School,* The burlesque includes an amazing caricature of a contemporary (Sir Fretful Plagiary = Richard Cumberland) and it is full of transient local allusions. For all that, it remains one of the most universally laughable compositions that has ever been penned in any language. Much more

truly than when Garrick died it might now be observed that when the author of *The Critic* gave up playwriting the "gaiety of nations was eclipsed."

For all his apparent laziness and carelessness, "Sherry" was in reality a very ambitious man. With the aid of resources as mysterious as those of Burke he bought the patent of Drury Lane Theatre, and when this proved itself unlikely to make his fortune or to relieve even the more urgent cases of distress among his creditors, the mercurial manager decided upon a political career. Fox had once said that he was the wittiest man he had ever known: so upon Fox should rest the responsibility of his political partisanship. Repulsion to Pitt made him more than ever a devoted Foxite. Like much of his dramatic composition, his most famous oratory, notably "the great Begum speech," smells rather too much of the lamp. And yet his wit was by no means always laboured. Take, for instance, his remark about his stomach digesting in its waistcoat, his great unquotable repartee to the Regent, his aspiration after the lost tribes of Israel, the pleasantry on Rose when he christened his son William Pitt ("a rose by any other name would smell as sweet"), his quip to Mrs. Cholmondeley when she asked him for an acrostic on her name, "It would be so long that I should have to divide it into cantos," or the story of how he hiccoughed out the name of "Wilberforce" when picked nine-tenths intoxicated out of the gutter—these things point surely to no very patent obtuseness or undue deliberation in the exercise of impromptu faculty.

The dramatist is admirably representative of a certain social milieu. He lived in the brightest set in an era of witty talkers. Everywhere he went he came under the sparkle of wit. Some of it may be tinsel, perhaps, but it all looked very well under the lights. His plays represent the sparkle of this brilliant crowd. He has no knowledge of

the heart worth speaking about; but he catches the trick of phrase or the foible of thought and manner and represents it in an instant. During the whole of his brilliant career Sheridan had exercised a seemingly occult power over his creditors, and the first premonition that he received of a decline of this wonderful faculty was doubtless largely responsible for his death on July 7th, 1816. His epitaph may be found in the genial sentences of Byron: "Poor Brinsley! He has written the best comedy, the best farce, the best address, the best oration . . . I have more than once heard him say that he never had a shilling of his own. To be sure he contrived to extract a good many of other people's. . . . He could soften the heart of an attorney. There has been nothing like it since the days of Orpheus!"[1]

From Sheridan the English drama of the kind that combines literary excellence with stage efficiency makes a leap from 1779 to 1892, when *Lady Windermere's Fan*, by Oscar Wilde (1856—1900), was produced at the St. James's Theatre. Wilde's later plays, such as *A Woman of No Importance* and *The Importance of being Earnest* (1895), exhibit the quintessence of playful artifice, irresponsible persiflage, and antiquarian wit—skilfully modernised. In these airy productions he was as imitative, as conventional, as heartless, as clever, and almost as successful as "Sherry" himself. Wilde was a most humane and kindly dispositioned man, and depraved though he was in his private life, his cynicism was probably not much more

[1] Goldsmith's works have been edited by Percy (1801), Washington Irving (1825), Prior (1837), Peter Cunningham (1854), Masson (1868),* J. W. M. Gibbs (1889). The *Poems* have been edited by Bolton Corney in 1846, also by Dobson, Langbridge, Woodward, and many others. See Birkbeck Hill's *Writers and Readers*, *The Age of Johnson*, Miller's *Mid-Eighteenth Century*, and the *Lives* by Johnson, Macaulay, Sir James Prior, John Forster, 1848* (abridged by R. Ingpen, 1903), and William Black. There are no good books on Sheridan.

than skin deep. The Germans have taken his Art for Art theories seriously and have produced and criticised his *Salome* and other paradoxically intense but insincere æsthetic products with amazing gravity. Superior in our opinion is the work of Arthur Wing Pinero, the most considerable of the playable playwrights, who are at the same time literary, of our generation. His first play, *The Money Spinner*, was given at the St. James's in January, 1881, and since then he has produced no less than thirty farces, light comedies, and dramas, among the latter *The Profligate, The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith, The Gay Lord Quex, Iris, Letty*, and *His House in Order* (1906). Of these, in our opinion *Iris* and *Letty* are the best. No dramatist has ever made a more triumphant progress from mediocrity to mastery than Pinero. Not too old to learn new stagecraft from the younger Dumas and Ibsen, a most careful workman, skilful in character-drawing and a perfect adept in every kind of technical resource, his work has continued to be marred chiefly by two influences —an undue glare from the footlights, and an undue echo from the cheap press of the day, which has made itself felt too often in his dialogue. With all its defects, however, his work as a whole is probably the most satisfying that we have produced in this country since the time of Vanbrugh; and his influence is seen strongly in the work, for instance, of the most promising of our younger dramatists, Granville Barker, author of *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905). More ingenious but less interesting in the main, because less sincere, is the modern morality drama of J. M. Barrie and G. Bernard Shaw. Adapting himself deliberately to the rquirements of a frivolous generation, Mr. Shaw, who is unrivalled in cleverness among the writers of his epoch, has adopted epigram, conveyed through the medium of dialogue (and monologue), as his instrument for preaching the bankruptcy of our present social system and the necessity of its being mended or ended without delay. People who only want to be amused are apt to say that the epigrams are excellent, but the teaching fustian, whereas those whose aim in life extends beyond being amused are inclined with manifest unfairness to say just the reverse. Yet when all is said it seems to us that there have been few writers of such first-rate ability as Mr. Shaw who have worked so hard to be amusing with so little promise of permanent result.

CHAPTER IX

WILLIAM COWPER AND GEORGE CRABBE

"He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adoration;
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken;
Named softly as the household name of one whom God hath taken."

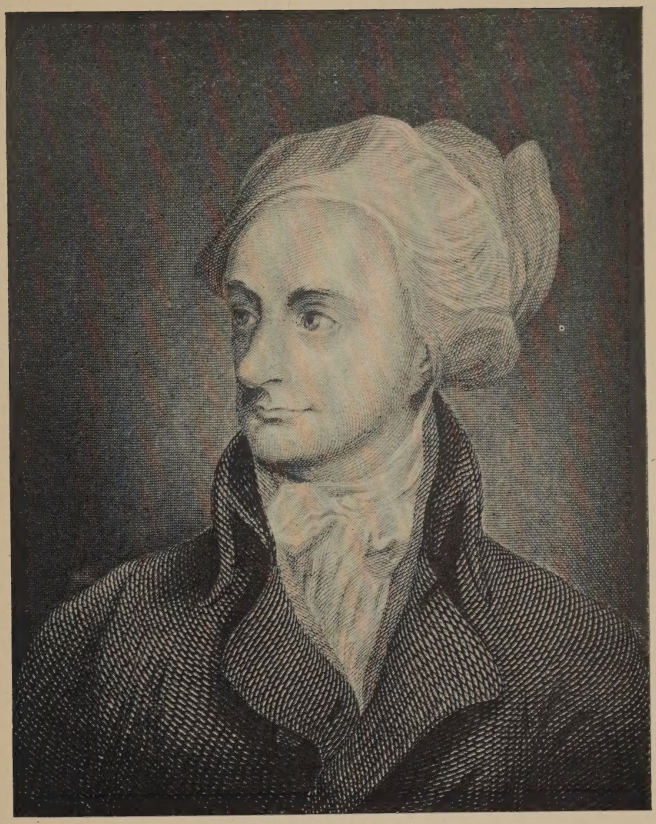
MRS. BROWNING'S *Cowper's Grave.*

The Life of Cowper—Early Writings—*The Task*—An Unrivalled Letter-writer—George Crabbe—"Nature's sternest Painter, yet the best."

WILLIAM COWPER, one of the foremost of English letter-writers and the greatest master of English verse between the death of Pope and the rise of the illustrious group headed by Wordsworth, was born at Great Berkhampstead in November, 1731. He was the son of the rector of that place, a chaplain of George II., and nephew of the distinguished Lord Chancellor, Earl Cowper. His mother was one of the Donnes of Ludham in Norfolk. A portrait of her was given to the poet by one of her relatives, Mrs. Bodham, in February, 1790, whereupon he wrote that famous piece, *On Receipt of my Mother's Picture*—with tears he wrote it and without tears few can read it. At the private school of Dr. Pitman at Market Street, Cowper was cruelly bullied. "I well remember," he relates of his particular tyrant, "being afraid to lift my eyes upon him higher than his knees, and I knew him better by his shoe-buckles than by any other part of his dress." At ten he was placed at Westminster, where he was much happier, where "slovenly, dirty, good-natured" Vinny Borne was his usher, and Warren Hastings, Cumberland, Churchill, Lloyd, Bent-

ley, and Colman were among his school-fellows. With the three last, Bonnell Thornton and Hill, he afterwards joined in the verbal saturnalia of the Nonsense Club, and the phrase-capping encounters of its members can hardly have failed to aid Cowper in acquiring that masterly dexterity in "refractory rhyming" which is so distinctive of his work. He left school in 1748 and went to reside next year as an articled pupil with a London solicitor, his fellow-clerk being Edward Thurlow, who jestingly promised to provide for him when he was Lord Chancellor. During the next four years, apart from a few cheap essays for the magazines and a little verse translation, he did practically *nothing;* he was in a chronic state of idleness, indigestion, and intense restlessness, which prevented him from any steady application, though he read over and over again his favourite Latin and Greek poets, and enlarged his acquaintance among the English poets. In 1753 occurred another crisis of melancholia, during the intensity of which his one solace was George Herbert. He was finally cured by a change of scene and the lively society of his cousin Harriet, afterwards Lady Hesketh. Early in 1754 he was called to the Bar. He moved from the Middle to the Inner Temple, where he bought rooms in 1759, but he had no intention of practising and resigned himself wholly to the amusements of literature and the lighter frivolities of a cultivated man about town. He was disappointed in an attachment which he had formed for Harriet's younger sister, Theodora, his uncle, Ashley Cooper, refusing to sanction the marriage of the cousins, but he took the blow very calmly and went on dissipating his small patrimony, leading an idle and agreeable life and persistently ignoring the desirability of settling down or earning a living. These twelve irresponsible years must evidently have been of the greatest importance in the formation of Cowper's poetical character.

In the summer of 1762, when he had broken into his last hundred pounds, he first began to feel really nervous about his worldly prospects. His influential relatives were alive to the necessity of making some provision for him at the public expense, and they succeeded in getting him a nomination to the post of clerk of the journals of the House of Lords; but the ordeal of qualifying by public examination proved more than his nervous and diffident spirit could stand, and he became for a season absolutely demented. After futile attempts at suicide, the sequel of a return in redoubled force of morbid images to his mind, he was placed under the sympathetic Dr. Cotton at a private asylum at St. Albans, whence he emerged after eighteen months' sojourn, in June, 1765, for the time at least completely cured. His resignation of a small post which he held (that of Commissioner of Bankrupts) left him almost without resources, but his relatives clubbed together and provided him with a subsistence allowance. His recovery was accompanied by a profound conviction of the solemnity of religion and of the healing power of Christ. A conviction of past errors led him to break entirely with his former life. His brother, John Cowper, a fellow of Corpus Christi, Cambridge, whom he dearly loved, settled him at Huntingdon. At Huntingdon he made the acquaintance of a clergyman and ex-schoolmaster, who took pupils in the town, the Rev. Morley Unwin, his wife Mary, and his son and daughter. From the first they treated him like a near relation, and he was so fascinated by their society, especially that of Mrs. Unwin and her son William, that he became after a short interval an inmate of their house, to the expense of which he contributed at a moderate rate. In July, 1767, Morley Unwin met with his death from a horse accident, and thereupon Mrs. Unwin and Cowper, towards whom her behaviour had always been that of a mother towards her son, resolved to leave Hunting-



FROM THE PAINTING BY ROMNEY

WILLIAM COWPER

don to remove to some place where they would be under an Evangelical minister of the gospel. Whilst undecided where to go, a visitor arrived in the person of the Rev. John Newton, a famous Evangelical preacher, who had been requested to call on them by Dr. Conyers, a Cambridge friend of young Unwin. They were greatly impressed by his goodness and decided to go and live in his immediate neighbourhood at Olney in Buckinghamshire. Newton became Cowper's spiritual director. His history as a poet commences at Olney, but not until some thirteen years elapsed and he was close upon fifty. The damp climate of Olney and the strain of the pastoral work undertaken for Newton [1] brought on a very serious recurrence of his malady in 1773. He was overwhelmed by a melancholy of the deepest dye, and imagined that his friends were in a conspiracy against him, and that the avenger of blood was pursuing him. As in the case of Bunyan and the early Puritans, his terror, tinged by religious mania, made him think that he was eternally damned. Nor did he ever completely purge himself of the delusion that some mysterious causes had made him the object of the irrevocable hatred of his Creator. Recovery in this instance was protracted and tedious; but for the maternal care of Mrs. Unwin, whom Cowper for a brief instant in 1772 had contemplated marrying, his malady might have proved fatal to him. Religious preoccupation was the one thing necessary for him to avoid. What he wanted was light, amusing occupation of a not too absorbing kind.

For three years his faculties were unequal to the production of an ordinary letter, but in May, 1776, he managed to resume his correspondence with Joseph Hill, who regulated his pecuniary affairs for him. Previous to this he had amused himself with drawing, gardening, taming lev-

[1] Newton set him to write hymns which are at times the embodiment of despair.

erets, and making wooden boxes and bird-cages. Now his correspondence engaged more and more of his attention, and gradually induced a happier and more active frame of mind. In his letters addressed mainly to Hill, William Unwin, his cousin Lady Hesketh, and later to his bookseller and Hayley, he avoids the deep wounds which religious gloom had inflicted, and reveals himself again, rather on the bright, clever, affectionate, and merry side.

He wrote letters and, later on, verse for the same reason that he painted or planed—namely, to occupy himself and distract his mind. He begged his correspondents to burn his letters, and had no idea of their being carefully preserved. This is one of the reasons of their charm. His letters were not and have not the air of being deliberately composed for "circulation"; yet in point of fact they are as elegant and classic as the most finished compositions. "His humour, like his style, is spontaneous and delightful, and imparts a flavour to an infinity of trifles which in themselves would have been insipid. He never exaggerates for the sake of effect. Every word bears the impress of truth." Conciseness, naturally, is of no moment with him, nor does he deal much in opinions and criticisms. He confines himself mainly to the little incidents and feelings of the hour, and these he tells with a charm and distinctness unequalled in any other familiar correspondence. They present to us, with a vividness to which Madame de Sevigné alone can approach, the mind of the writer in his everyday dress environed by the trivial accidents of everyday life, and it is for this reason that, while recognising their inferiority as sources of entertainment to the letters of Walpole or Lamb, we are emboldened to describe their writer as the foremost of English letter-writers.

In the summer of 1781 Lady Austen was staying with her sister, Mrs. Jones, the wife of a clergyman, near Olney. The poet was on visiting terms with the Joneses, and chanc-

ing to see Lady Austen in their company when he was looking out of his window, he was so struck with her appearance that he sent Mrs. Unwin to invite the party to tea. His first impression was confirmed. He was perfectly charmed with "Sister Anne," as he soon began to call this new acquaintance. She was a woman of great vivacity, quick sensibilities, and keen appreciation of literature. Once admitted into the inner circle of Cowper and Mrs. Unwin, her lively spirits drove away his spirit of melancholy. Cowper wrote songs which she set to music and sung to the harpsichord. One evening in October, 1782,[1] when he seemed depressed, she told him the story of John Gilpin, as her nurse had related it to her. Next morning at breakfast he read them the legend in the form of a ballad. In November it appeared in *The Public Advertiser*. A well-known popular reciter (Henderson) saw its possibilities; it became town talk, the general favourite it has ever since remained. Cowper's ordinary humour is less broad, but in Gilpin he lets himself go, and the verses seem an echo of the peals of laughter that were heard issuing from his bedroom on the night of its composition. He was urged to write a sequel, but wisely abstained. But Lady Austen was an especial admirer of blank verse. Cowper shared her sentiment, and promised to write something in it if she would furnish the subject. "Oh, you can never be in want of a subject," said Lady Austen, "you can write upon anything; write upon this sofa." This was in the summer of 1783, and fifteen months later *The Task* was in the hands of the printer. It was published in 1785, along with *Tirocinium* (a poem in rhyming decasyllabics on the dangers and abuses of

[1] His first volume of *Poems*, containing *Table Talk, The Progress of Error, Truth, Expostulation, Hope, Charity, Conversation, Retirement*, and shorter pieces was published early in this year.

public schools), and proved immediately successful. In his first volume of *Poems* Cowper had made his confession of faith; in *The Task,* commencing with mock heroics upon the set theme of the sofa, he was led on to depict and delineate with frequent illustrations the full round and tenor of his every-day life at Olney, and "the thoughts of a tender, tranquil, contemplative mind which sympathises with everything that is good, lovely, wise, and merciful." The didactic framework is subordinate to the picture—an almost unrivalled series of landscapes, earth-moods, and interiors. The beauties of these are of the tranquil and not the exciting kind, and the exquisiteness of the workmanship is easily overlooked by hasty eyes. As with other works of consummate excellence, the impression of the greatness of this increases with prolonged acquaintance.

Unfortunately, a slight misunderstanding on Lady Austen's part gave rise to an apprehension that she might be preparing for herself the *rôle* of Vanessa; and a tension with Mrs. Unwin was, in all probability, the immediate cause of Cowper's severing the tie with his Egeria. A successor and partial substitute was happily found in the person of his cousin, Lady Hesketh, the Stella of the poet's declining years, with whom he had reopened relations in October, 1785. Through her beneficent intervention, the lodge in the neighbouring park of Weston, belonging to the friendly family of the Throckmortons, was furnished for Cowper and Mrs. Unwin in the autumn of 1786 and this proved on the whole an advantageous change from the old house in Olney. With the completion of *The Task* the poet found his stock of original experience exhausted, but he was drawn by a happy inspiration to undertake a blank-verse translation of Homer, the elaboration and revision of which proved the solace and distraction of his later years down to 1791,

when it was published. In the same year Mrs. Unwin's health began to decline, and his own dejection tended more and more to become chronic. Yet in flashes, lighting up this deplorable gloom, apart from letters that carry with them all the old charm, he produced some exquisite poems, among them the tender, incomparable lament *To Mary* and *Yardley Oak,* a poem with passages of almost Miltonic grandeur and phraseological and metrical skill. In 1793, when Lady Hesketh paid her annual visit to Weston Lodge, she found Mrs. Unwin relapsing into second childhood, and Cowper a despairing prisoner by her bedside. By the spring of 1794 he was living on sopped toast and refusing to open his letters, though one of these contained the offer of a Crown pension of £300.

In 1795 the sufferers were removed to the Norfolk coast; Mary Unwin died at East Dereham on December 17th, 1796. During the winter of 1797-8 Cowper was beguiled into revising his Homer; this was completed on March 8th, 1799, and a few days later he wrote *The Castaway,* his final effort, and one of the most powerful, at original composition. The comparison of himself to a swimmer, solitary in a storm-swept ocean, expresses with terrible force the last phase of his unutterable despair. "England's sweetest and most pious bard" (as East Dereham's other celebrity, George Borrow, called him), Cowper passed away in that small township on April 25th, 1800; he was buried in what is now known as the Cowper Chapel of East Dereham Church.

Unrivalled as a letter-writer, Cowper is, perhaps, the greatest of our secondary poets. The ungovernable impulse and imaginative passion of the great masters of poesy it would be scarcely reasonable to claim for him. His motives to express himself in verse came almost exclusively from the outside. The greater part of his poetry is, strictly speaking, of the occasional order. In all the

arts that raise the best occasional poetry to the level of greatness Cowper is supreme; in phrase moulding, verbal gymnastic and prosodical marquetry he has scarcely a rival, and the fruits of his poetic industry are enshrined in the filigree of a most delicate fancy and a highly cultivated intelligence, purified and thrice refined in the fire. His lucidity has the peculiar quality of a great gift concentrated into an interval. In many of his shorter poems the artistic simplicity is indistinguishable from the stern reticence of profound genius.[1]

Akin to Cowper as a poet of observation and reflection rather than of the higher imagination (though far inferior to him as regards technique), George Crabbe, who was born within a few years of Pope's death, affords an interesting link between the age of Akenside and the age of Rogers; but it is his peculiar distinction that while he is one of the most concrete of our poets as regards matter, he reverts in manner to the abstract and generalising style of the *Essay on Man.*

George Crabbe was born at the little Suffolk seaport of Aldeburgh on Christmas Eve, 1754. His father was a schoolmaster, then a collector of salt duties, and part

[1] Given an ordinary newspaper paragraph about wreck or battle, turn it into the simplest possible language, do not introduce a single metaphor or figure of speech, indulge in none but the most obvious of all reflections—as, for example, that when a man is once drowned he won't win any more battles—and produce as the result a copy of verses which nobody can ever read without instantly knowing them by heart. How Cowper managed to perform such a feat, and why not one poet even in a hundred can manage it, are questions which might lead to some curious critical speculations. The dates of the composition of his minor masterpieces are approximately as follows: *Boadicea,* 1780; *Goldfinch,* 1780; *Adjudged Case,* 1780; *Selkirk,* 1781; *Royal George,* 1782; *Poplars are felled,* 1784; *Needless Alarm,* 1788; *Dog and Water-lily,* 1788; *Yardley Oak* and *Retired Cat,* 1791; *To Mary,* 1793.

owner of a fishing-boat. His boyhood was rendered gloomy by parental quarrels and his father's contempt for his studious tastes; he got some schooling, however, at Aldeburgh, and was apprenticed to a surgeon at Woodbridge. After many hardships, and little or no success in his profession, he determined in April, 1780, to seek his fortune in London, where he arrived with £3 and a few poems in his pocket. He found an insolvent publisher to issue his poem, *The Candidate*. Nothing came of it, and Crabbe was reduced to the last extremity when a chance letter obtained for him the generous patronage of Edmund Burke. Henceforth his lines fell in easy places.

As Burke's guest at Beaconsfield he met such distinguished patrons as Fox, Reynolds, Dr. Johnson, and Lord Chancellor Thurlow, who presented him with £100. In 1781 Dodsley brought out Crabbe's first poem of note, *The Library,* and in December of the same year, by his distinguished friend's advice, he took deacon's orders. In 1782 he was licenced to the curacy of Aldeburgh, which he gladly exchanged in a few months for the chaplaincy to the Duke of Rutland at Belvoir Castle. In 1783 appeared *The Village,* which Dr. Johnson looked over and revised with every symptom of approval. His gloomy views of bucolic life were well adapted to Johnson's own prepossessions. He soon obtained country preferment, and quitted his dependent position at the Duke's mansion, where his earnings had enabled him to marry Sarah Elmy (the "Mira" of his poems), the prudent niece of a wealthy yeoman at Parham, to whom he had been long attached. Two years after his marriage *The Newspaper* appeared, in 1785. During the next twenty years, spent happily enough between his plural livings in Dorset and Suffolk, and his rectory at Muston, in Leicestershire, Crabbe published nothing whatever; but his vein was far from exhausted and his work was resumed in 1807 with

greater success and vigour than ever, though with no greater change of manner than if twenty days instead of twenty years of silence had elapsed—a noteworthy contrast to the case of Cowper.

During his productive period he wrote by rule—like Trollope—so many lines a day. Crabbe's later productions were: *The Parish Register* (1807), containing the once famous story of Phœbe Dawson (which afforded solace to Fox when on his death-bed), *The Borough* (1810), and *Tales in Verse* (1812).

When three-score and ten years old he was still busy, amused and interested in life, a good father, a good pastor, and a good neighbour. Jane Austen (of all people) thought he would have made an ideal husband. He died at Trowbridge on February 3rd, 1832, in his seventy-eighth year. His monument in the church has that fine descriptive line of Byron:

> **This fact in Virtue's name let Crabbe attest,**
> **Though *Nature's sternest painter, yet the best.***

This last verse and Horace Smith's happy annotation in *Rejected Addresses,* in which he describes Crabbe as a Pope in worsted stockings, contain in germ all the criticism of Crabbe that is of first-rate value. His devotion to the Popean couplet was undeviating and undiscriminating. We have in Crabbe's slow-moving patchwork of metrical tales the heroic couplet in its most monotonous and soporific form, the cæsura or pause occurring after the fourth syllable with the regularity of clock-work; the rhyming, too, seems mechanical, the rhythm is devoid of interest. He seems perpetually working himself up to a Popean epigram, but he never arrives at the point. Machinery deteriorates with age, and the wheeze and click of the Augustan decasyllable becomes positively distress-

ing in 1819. Yet, even with this worn machinery, it is wonderful what Crabbe effects. Reacting somewhat tardily against pastoral poetry in the same kind of way that George Douglas reacted against the prettiness of the "Kailyard" school, Crabbe describes country life like a coarse-fibred Cowper, whose observatory is not in the garden belvedere but in the market-hall of some exiguous seaport. From this vantage ground he retails his grave-digger's gossip, not of an Auburn or an Eden, but of the Aldeburgh of his cramped and penurious youth; and he is happiest when he is stirring up the outcast dregs of human society, the paupers, the gypsies, the poachers and smugglers, and the luckless honest poor. Writing with a twopenny nail, says Landor, he "scratched rough truths and rogues' facts upon mud walls." The sternness of his realism derives its grandeur from the width of human landscape that his vision embraces. His unit is the span of a man's life, and he regards the world, not by the light of some spring episode in the life of a man, but in its sad and autumn aspect, when the foliage is sere and when things are hastening to decay and death—when early hopes and illusions are faded and the universal lot of man is seen in its bare deformity. Like a weather-beaten veteran returning to his native village, he elicits a long enumeration of tragedies, mischances, brutalities, and failures; these he narrates with a sincerity as bleak as that of the east wind on his own east coast.[1]

[1] There are collective editions of Cowper by Wm. Hayley (4 vols., 1803-6), Jn. Johnson (3 vols., 1815), Robert Southey* (15 vols., 1835-7), Robert Bell, Jn. Bruce, Canon Benham, H. S. Milford and J. C. Bailey * (the last five, of the *Poems* only) The *Early Poems* were specially edited by James Croft in 1825. There is a very handsome and complete chronological edition in the *Letters* by Th. Wright (4 vols., 1904). There are interesting studies by Sainte-Beuve, Stopford Brooke, Stephen

(*Hours in a Library*), and Bagehot. An elaborate edition of Crabbe was issued in 8 vols. with very fine plates in 1834, when George Crabbe's pious and sincere Memoir of his father (corrected by "Little Grange" FitzGerald) also appeared. A one-volume edition appeared in 1860. There are also Memoirs by T. E. Kebbel, Anthony Deane (Selections in Little Library), and Canon Ainger. Celebrations were held at Olney and Aldeburgh in 1900 and 1905 (see *Times*, September, 15, 1905).

CHAPTER X

POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY, NATURE, AND RELIGION

"Think of the common man's tiresome details of the weather which he has known in past years, and then recollect Gilbert White's account of his great frosts, his hot summers and his thunderstorms. . . . Selborne was to him a kind of Robinson Crusoe's island, which comprehended within itself all his daily interest. . . . It is an element in the rustic charm of the *History* that White's attention was perpetually fixed upon one narrow spot of English ground. His mind was a lens exquisite in definition, but of small field. . . . There is a genius in the book . . . a small thing perfectly done."—L. C. MIALL.

Edmund Burke—Junius—Tom Paine—William Cobbett—Adam Smith—Gilbert White—Natural history—The open-air school—The attack and defence of ancient creeds and philosophies—Shaftesbury—Berkeley—Butler—Paley—Watson.

I

THERE is, as has been remarked, a certain unwillingness in the world to admit that the same man has excelled in various pursuits. Yet we find Erskine and Thurlow admitting that Burke had a profound knowledge of jurisprudence, and when Adam Smith came to London he was amazed to find to what extent Burke, by sheer force of deductive reasoning, had anticipated his own carefully constructed economic hypotheses.

Born in January, 1729, the son of a solicitor in Dublin, Edmund Burke was educated at Ballitore School under Abraham Shackleton, to whom he always professed deep obligations. The Shackletons in the days of his prosperity contributed to the "tail of Irish Paddies" which Burke's

Whig friends made fun of. In 1743 he became a student at Trinity College, Dublin, and in April, 1747, was entered at the Middle Temple, though he did not actually settle in London until 1750. Indifferent to law, he surrendered himself to a state of *disponibilité universelle.* He filled up his time by frequenting the theatre, studying logic and natural philosophy, and writing poetry. In 1751-3 he made instructive tours through England. The first literary production of Burke's that is preserved is his travesty [1] or *reductio ad absurdum* of Bolingbroke's plan for throwing ridicule upon established religion. "Show me," he says in his *Vindication of Natural Society* (1756), "one absurdity in religion and I will undertake to show you a hundred in political institutions and laws." In his next essay, *The Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful,* Burke makes the first independent contribution in English to the treatment of æsthetics as a branch of philosophy, and crude though it was in many respects, his work stimulated its German translator Lessing in his great contribution to æsthetic thought, *The Laokoon* of 1766.

In 1759, under the auspices of the bookseller Dodsley, Burke began a yearly chronicle of events under the title of *The Annual Register.* He had already contributed chapters to an historical survey of our American Colonies, and had projected a History of England upon a liberal scale. In 1761 the marvellous aptitude which Burke had manifested as an orator and political thinker (in books and debating societies, mainly, hitherto) led to his appointment as secretary and brain commissary of that somewhat empty-headed politician known as Single-Speech Hamilton. Hamilton was egotistic and exacting. In return for £300 a year he wanted to absorb the whole time and talent of Burke. This was resented, and the connection

[1] Bolingbroke's style is copied very closely.

was broken. Burke was now thirty-seven years of age, with a wife and child, but with no employment or means of income, for his pride had led him to resign an Irish pension. In a very short time, however, he obtained employment as private secretary to Rockingham, upon that statesman's taking office in 1765, and next year he entered Parliament for Wendover, and at once made his mark as a debater. In 1769, in his *Observations on the Present State of the Nation,* he defended the conduct of the Rockingham Ministry; but it is in his next piece, called *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (1770). in which he unfolds with an almost Oriental luxuriance of diction and similitude the iniquities of the double cabinet system (by which George III. sought to evade the reality of Parliamentary control), that we first catch the long swell of Burke's rolling periods. In his choice of words and rhythms of a swelling and stately sound, Burke shows his affinities with Dryden, the archpriest of modern English prose; in the wonderful balance of his clauses he shows the effect of a long study of Bolingbroke. But in the architectonics of his prose, in the manner in which he piles up effects and accumulates them by a process of elaborate metaphor and ornament, Burke is absolutely individual and original. Nor does he allow the colouring and decoration, in which his taste always inclined rather to the gorgeous, to overpower the impression of spontaneity. The fiery heat of the original impulse is always discernible as that of a generous nature "pouring out his mind on paper."

Nothing illustrates the prominent traits of Burke's mind better than his discourses on the American War. *Speech on American Taxation* (April, 1774), *Speech on Conciliation with America* (March, 1775), and *Letters to the Sheriffs of Bristol* (April, 1777)—here more clearly than elsewhere we perceive Burke's profound knowledge, un-

biassed judgment, far-seeing sagacity, and rooted abhorrence of *abstract politics*. He is never tired of flinging his contempt at general maxims, abstruse points, and metaphysical subtleties. He has no patience with doctrinaire politicians who would prefer to see a country ruined rather than give up some pet theory they had fostered within the walls of their libraries. How impotent his eloquence was to mitigate the unfortunate policy of George III. and his Government, with the majority of English people at their back, is known to every one. Burke had the same enlightened views in regard to the government of Ireland, in regard to the English *régime* in India, and in regard to reform and the reduction of useless offices and extravagantly paid sinecure posts about the Court. In his *Reflections upon the French Revolution* (published November 1st, 1790), the anger caused by the spectacle of a nation trying to regenerate the present by turning upside down all the institutions which it had inherited from the past influences him to such an extent that his rhetoric loses some of its old suasive force, and Burke occasionally "sees red." But it is not just to refer to his attitude towards the Revolution and the quarrel in which this attitude involved him with his former associates as inconsistent with the tenets of his earlier political life and his championship of America. In the best sense of the word, apart from all party significance, Burke was always a Conservative, and the only respect in which his later writings differ from those of earlier date is that they display a mind much more alive than formerly to the dangers of popular illusions, and that they urge with ever-increasing fervour the necessity for those restraining institutions which he always advocated as necessary to the preservation of civilised society.

The *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* was Burke's cogent vindication of himself from the charge of incon-

sistency with which the Foxites twitted him. The gravity of Burke's indictment against the Revolution and its works ("confronting Jacobinism with all the relentlessness of a Jacobin") had the capital effect of bringing over the waverers of Fox's old party to the side of the Government and the policy of war with France. But events were doing more than words could do to confirm the opinion of Burke's sagacity and foresight. If we realise the impression likely to be made upon the sober and homely English imagination by that heightening of horror by horror, we may easily understand how people came to listen to Burke's voice as the voice of inspiration, and to look on his burning anger as the holy fervour of a prophet of the Lord. Many of his phrases and metaphors ("men of light and leading," the figure of the cattle and the grasshoppers, or the magnificent allusion to the planetary radiance of Marie Antoinette) have entered permanently into the language.

In the meantime Burke, whose needs had always been considerably in advance of his pecuniary resources (eked out by loans from his friends, from repayment of which he was generously released more than once), had been granted a pension of between two and three thousand a year by the King. It had been settled that he should be Earl of Beaconsfield,[1] and the title would doubtless have been conferred but for the inopportune death of Burke's only son, a terrible blow for the weary statesman, but most devoted and assiduous father. The Duke of Bedford, an embittered and narrow-minded partisan who resented Burke's contribution to the disruption of the old Whig party, had the indecency to assail Burke's pension in the House of Lords. The chief of the house of Russell was

[1] As early as 1768 he had purchased for over £20,000 the estate of Gregories, at Beaconsfield. How he raised the money and how he supported his expenses in this mansion remain somewhat of a mystery.

the most unfit person in the world to protest against Crown grants! The temptation to pulverise a "booby-duke" proved irresistible to the rhetorician in Burke, and his *Letter to a Noble Lord* (February, 1796) is the most splendid repartee in the English language.[1] It illustrates the eastern opulence of imagery, displayed in metaphor and simile which Burke had ever at the disposal of his indignation or his rapture (generally on the hidden beauties and marvels of the British constitution). The historical past was to him an immense storehouse of apposite instances and historical parallels; not dead, but vivified by present experience, practical sagacity, and above all, a strong constructive imagination. Occasionally his Celtic wealth of fancy got the better of him, his metaphors were confused and his invective became tumultuary; but he was not without the saving grace of humour, that rarest endowment of the perfervid rhetorician. Despite the griefs and disillusionments of his later days it is a delightful picture we conjure up of Burke in his retirement at Beaconsfield, amid a circle of friends and correspondents, including the best and noblest-minded men of that age.

After Stratford, few shrines in England are more venerable than that at Beaconsfield, where within a few yards

[1] The tormentor concludes this rich duke-baiting with a few playfully scornful strokes. "Surely the noble duke must be in a dream. Why, the crown grants to the house of Russell were so enormous as not only to outrage economy, but even to stagger credibility. The Duke of Bedford is the leviathan among all the creatures of the Crown. He tumbles about his unwieldly bulk; he plays and frolics in the ocean of the royal bounty. Huge as he is, and whilst he 'lies floating many a rood,' he is still a creature. His ribs, his fins, his whalebone, his blubber, the very spiracles through which he spouts a torrent of brine against his origin and covers me all over with the spray—everything of him and about him is from the throne. Is it for *him* to question the dispensation of the royal favour?"

of the pyramidal monument of Edmund Waller, and within a few miles only of Milton's cottage at Chalfont and Gray's tomb at Stoke Poges, a monument was erected in 1898 as a memorial of the undying fame of the statesman who died there on July 9th, 1797.

It may be that Burke is comparatively little read, but his thought permeates the whole of the political writing and speculation of the nineteenth century, just as Darwin and Spencer, even when unread, pervade the scientific thought and argument of a later day. In politics he stands for the stability of inherited institutions as moulded and adapted by the habitual usage of a complicated society. In letters he stands for the harmony of sense and sound in English prose. He captivates the senses with the one while he subdues the reason with the other. The volume of both, with the imaginative uplift of his similes and the "combining force" of his intellect that winds so slowly and majestically into the heart of his subject, carry his readers far above the plains of humdrum (by which the horizon of press and platform is so ordinarily bounded) into a lofty region from which they can command new and surprising vistas both over the past and into the future.

THE series of seventy letters signed by Junius first appeared in *The Public Advertiser* between January 21st, 1769, and January 21st, 1772. They were revised by the author, and reprinted in March, 1772, in two small volumes, by Henry Sampson Woodfall. A greatly amplified edition, with additional letters (some of which are spurious), was issued in 1812 by George Woodfall. The original letters attracted the universal attention of English politicians, owing to the writer's apparent familiarity with current political topics and personages, and his boldness in commenting upon them. The climax was reached on December 16th, 1769, when Junius, in a letter "to the King," barbed a most indecent attack by an imputation of personal cowardice, and reminded George III. that the crown "acquired by one revolution" might be "lost by another."

Woodfall was prosecuted for printing and publishing this in *The Public Advertiser*, and acquitted on a technical point, while John Almon, who had issued and sold several reprints of the letters, was punished by fine.

To indicate any express conclusion as to the authorship of the *Junius Letters* would occupy a good deal of space. That space is already enormous. Like Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, or the Man in the Iron Mask, the Casket Letters, the Chevalier D'Eon, Hannibal's route over the Alps, or the authorship of *Eikon Basilike* or *The Whole Duty of Man*, the subject has begot a literature to itself, bristling with technicalities and expert opinions. All that seems tolerably certain is that the writer was one of a clique of dissident Whigs—Grenvillites, Wilkites, and doctrinaires—of whom Sir Philip Francis (1740—1818), a scheming politician of the third rank and a most prolific pamphleteer—one of the Rigbys of that generation—was a more or less prominent member. The writer may have been Francis himself, but this is vehemently denied by some of the ablest investigators, such as Charles Wentworth Dilke.

Among the numerous other supposed writers it is sufficient to name Lord Shelburne, Lord Sackville, Chatham, Chesterfield, Horne Tooke, Tom Paine, Edmund Burke, Gibbon, De Lolme, John Wilkes, Charles Lloyd, Hugh Boyd, Barré, the second ("bad") Lord Lyttelton, and Lady Temple.

Our own view is that Francis may have been the literary instrument of the *Letters*, but that they were directly inspired by Richard Grenville, Earl Temple, that maleficent magnate whose obscure alliances and labyrinthine antipathies exactly suit those of the anonymous bludgeoner.

But for the present it is probably best to regard the case as not proven. A great many letters and documents will have to come out of their present repositories before the secret history of the first twenty years of George III.'s reign can be written. In the meantime, the fact that at any moment decisive evidence as to the authorship may come to light accentuates the proverbial danger of prophecy.

The importance of Junius, whether from a political or literary point of view, is not likely to increase. It is, perhaps, today no exaggeration to say that it has decreased, is decreasing, yet ought still further to be diminished. Junius, at his best, is no more than a very effective and very unscrupulous leader-writer. He has been termed a plaster image of Burke; but

this is a libel—upon the Italian modellers. Bred upon Bolingbroke and Pulteney and Chesterfield (from whom he derived a touch of Gallicism), and Johnson (from whom he caught a few tricks most detrimental to a really good style), he lacked the force of a really great pamphleteer such as Swift; still more did he lack the reach of a political sage like Burke; in finesse he is far beneath Halifax and Chesterfield; while he spurned as beneath him the plain and homely thrust of Defoe or the violent but delusive quarterstaff of Cobbett. He had only one key—that of studied insult and invective; but invective grows pale as political animosities become first obsolete and then forgotten. What literary merit there is in the invectives of Junius is not sustained by our interest in the personality of the man who launched them, as in the case of Demosthenes or Cicero, or Milton or Burke, or Hood or Hazlitt. The interest of the *Letters* thus tends to become more and more purely historical. The direct literary influence that they wielded over a class of political writers (best seen, perhaps, in the publicists of the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews* of the early part of last century, of whom Macaulay and Jeffrey are the most brilliant examples) is certainly dwindling, if it be not already extinct. Nor can the fact be regretted. With abundance of hollow declamation and shallow aphorism, the coinage is not altogether deficient in metallic lustre; it is the metal itself that rings false.

Burke and Junius were the two great successors of Bolingbroke in the eighteenth century as political writers. One wrote for his countrymen, the other for his faction; but both alike eschewed abstract political ideals and theories, and sought rather to adapt existing machinery than to model anew. But even empirical England had also its reconstructive theorists, its Jacobins, its physiocrats, and its economic doctrinaires. Conspicuous among these were men such as Horne Tooke (1736—1812), Richard Price (1723—1791) of the "Revolution" Club, whose once-famous sermon "On the Love of our Country" (November 4th, 1789) was the red rag that drew Burke into the controversial arena; James Mackintosh, an able though overworked historian and publicist who answered Burke in *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, but who, like Walpole and many other English admirers of Algernon Sidney, recanted their republicanism when the guns began to shoot; and "Gunpowder Priestly," as he was nicknamed, who vindicated the French Revolution in

Letters to Burke (January, 1791), and paid for his zeal by having his house in Birmingham burned by a loyalist mob. All these idealists were swallowed up in the vast theoretic superfices over which extended Jeremy Bentham, who from Priestley's formula, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," evolved a system that was deliberately designed to embrace the whole universe. In the application of this principle Bentham arrived at various conclusions, which he advocated irrespective of the conditions of society in his day and of the laws of social growth, which, indeed, neither he nor his disciples understood. He demanded, in fact, nothing less than the immediate remodelling of the government and the reconstruction of the laws.

The most notorious, if not the most effective, of the intransigeants of the time was Thomas Paine, the son of a small farmer at Thetford, in Norfolk, who was born in 1737, served in the navy, was dismissed from the excise, and migrated in 1774 to Philadelphia. Thence in 1776 he issued his short pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*, addressed to the inhabitants of America. Few pamphlets have had a career so triumphant. Written in a trenchant style, and with remarkable vigour and clearness, the brochure explained how America was going to ruin because of her connection with Britain. "Our plan is commerce. What advantage do we derive from the connection? 'Tis time to part"—thus with breathless haste he argues, enforces, and concludes. His *Rights of Man* (1791), in answer to Burke's *Reflections*, exhibits no little controversial skill. There is in Paine's style none of the "rhythmic ocean's roar" which hushes Burke's listeners. But Paine has a clear, practical manner of exposition, and he develops the absurd sides of aristocracy, and monarchy, and primogeniture, and other such archaic institutions, with an acrid cleverness that is by no means wholly contemptible. He was a sincere believer in the efficacy of theories about equality and fraternity. Robespierre pleaded eloquently for the abolition of the death penalty. Paine, as unscrupulous as William Godwin in many of his private relations, was an enthusiastic humanitarian and philanthropist. After a narrow escape from the guillotine, his last years appear to have been spent under more or less deplorable conditions in America, where he died in June, 1809. His views, like those of not a few anarchists and insurgents, were in many respects progressive and humane; at the same time he identi-

fied himself so completely with those whose life was devoted to agitation against constitutional government, and who aimed at the subversion in England of institutions dear to the mass of the people, that he was ostracised, burnt in effigy all over the kingdom, and long regarded as a pariah.

As a champion of popular rights Tom Paine was easily surpassed in the next generation by William Cobbett (1763—1834), probably the most vigorous stump orator and special pleader our language has ever known. Avowedly a disciple of Swift, Cobbett is perhaps the greatest master of what may be called the candid Saxon style—greater than Paine, greater even than Franklin. The son of a labourer, entirely self-taught, a common soldier grafted on a ploughman, Cobbett always knew instinctively how to dominate his environment and how to produce a sensation of transparent honesty when he was most deeply submerged in misrepresentation and deliberate fable. His books and brochures innumerable are so many red-hot shots, fired in succession from every point in the compass in England and America, for Cobbett went right round the circle from right to left and back again, dying in the odour of sanctity, a buttress of the Tory party and a pillar of Parliament. But he was most powerful when he was vindicating the righteousness of his own motives, recounting the experiences of his youth, or defending the poor and oppressed from the malice of their enemies. Whether in flattery, gammon, or invective, he was in turn unrivalled; but above all he excelled in his power of transmitting emotion to his readers—partly by sheer literary skill in manipulation, but also by the perspiring earnestness of his address, and sometimes by the grossest sentimentality. His *History of the Reformation*, *Sermons*, *Advice to a Young Man*, *Weekly Register*, *Peter Porcupine*, and other autobiographical *Tracts*, even more than his much-quoted *Rural Rides*, deserve a very high place among the title-deeds of the English vernacular.

Adam Smith was born at Kirkcaldy, Fifeshire, on June 5th, 1723, thirty-four years after Montesquieu. He was the son of Adam Smith, Writer to the Signet, Judge Advocate for Scotland, and Comptroller of the Customs in the Kirkcaldy district. From the burgh school the boy passed to Glasgow College, and then to Balliol at Oxford. Like other students of the century (Butler, Johnson, Gibbon, De Quincey, Southey, Shelley), he found the atmosphere of Oxford dull, heavy, and

repressive. In 1746 he shook the dust of Oxford from his feet, and after two years without regular occupation began some public lectures in the college at Edinburgh upon the then novel subject (*meminisse juvabit!*) of English literature. He had a talent for quoting poetry, and dreamed of becoming a poet himself. But he found rhyming beyond him, and he had a contempt for blank verse (for which Johnson "could have hugged him"). "They do well to call it blank, for blank it is." It was in the following year (1749), being then but twenty-six, that Adam Smith first addressed himself to what is pre-eminently his own "subject"—economics; and in this early course he already adumbrates his great idea of natural liberty in industrial affairs.

The Edinburgh lectures bore an immediate fruit. On the death of Mr. Loudon, Professor of Logic in Glasgow College, in 1750, Smith was appointed to the vacant chair, and so began that period of thirteen years of active academic work which he always looked back upon "as by far the most useful, and therefore by far the happiest and most honourable period" of his life. His popularity as a lecturer rapidly grew, and he had practically converted his fellow-citizens at Glasgow to free trade views long before he expounded them in a great book. His first publication of any importance, however, was not economic, but was the fruit of his lectures as Professor of Moral Philosophy (he had been transferred to this chair from that of Logic in 1752), and was called *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). It met with an unequivocal success when published in London by Millar, and received the approbation of so good a judge as Burke. David Hume, also, who had become one of Adam Smith's warmest friends, and with whom Smith always stayed when on his visits to Edinburgh, commended the book highly. One of the indirect results was that, largely through Hume's influence, the author was selected in the autumn of 1763 to be travelling tutor to the young Duke of Buccleuch, and set out in February, 1764, for Paris, Toulouse, and Geneva. He did not omit to pay a visit to Voltaire, whom he held in profound veneration, and on his return through Paris in 1766 he visited Quesnay. His pecuniary position henceforward assured by a pension of £300 from the Duke of Buccleuch, Adam Smith now spent some two years in retirement at Kirkcaldy, and it was during that period (1767-70) that he was perfecting the draft of his great book; but, neverthe-

less, between 1770 and 1776 the work was incessantly being altered, modified, and improved.

The Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, promised as long ago as 1759, was at length published on March 9th, 1776. The year 1776 is accordingly an epoch. If Horne's aphorism be true—that those books live the longest which have been carried longest in the womb of the parent—the longevity of *The Wealth of Nations* is assured, for it took twelve years to write and was in contemplation for nearly thirty. Great as was its reputation at the outset, it rapidly grew until, in 1857, in a moment of exaltation, Buckle wrote of it as in its ultimate results the most important book that has ever been written. This dictum was in no small measure anticipated by the German professor, C. J. Kraus, who wrote in 1796, that no book since the New Testament was likely to produce more beneficial results than *The Wealth of Nations*. In Spain, forward as ever in reaction and repression, the work had the honour of being suppressed by the Inquisition on account of "the lowness of its style and the looseness of its morals." Its practical effects were seen in England within a few months of its appearance: for the budgets of 1777 and 1778 were reinforced by means of new taxes based upon suggestions thrown out in *The Wealth of Nations*. These practical effects have continued ever since.

To describe Adam Smith as the founder of political economy is just as reasonable as it would be to describe Darwin as the founder of biology. The site on which to lay his foundations was surveyed and chosen by Smith himself; but as in the case of other great fabrics of literature and philosophy, the ground had been prepared and levelled by the process of the trituration of great minds for centuries beforehand. The distinctive achievement of Adam Smith was to discover the principle of national connection between a vast assemblage of disjected and co-ordinate facts and theories, in which what was sound and true was often linked to what was false and contradictory. He was the enchanter who educed order out of this chaos, and converted the study of political economy into a progressive science. In many respects his methods would seem to resemble those of Darwin. His intellectual proceedings were calm, patient, and regular; he mastered a subject slowly and circumspectly, and carried his principle, with steady tenacity, through multitudes of details that would have checked many

men, who, with greater mental ardour, yet lacked the same invincible persistence. Adam Smith survived his great work for fourteen years, and died on July 17th, 1790.

Into the majestic fabric of *The Wealth of Nations* he had concentrated all that was most valuable of the liberal thought of the day, and, like the great fabric reared by Burke, which is in many respects the fitting complement to it, his great work continues to permeate our national life and thought, often when we least suspect it. The main tendency and object of Smith's book can scarcely be better summarised than by Dugald Stewart, as demonstrating that the most effectual plan for advancing a people to greatness is to maintain that order of things which nature has pointed out by allowing every man as long as he observes the rules of justice to pursue his own interest in his own way, and to bring both his interest and capital into the freest competition with those of his fellow-citizens. Restrictive duties, prohibitions, and bounties, by which legislatures have endeavoured to force industries into particular channels, are alike condemned, and the natural effort of each man to improve his own position, when exerted with freedom and security, is represented as the mainspring of national progress.

II

Gilbert White, born on July 18th, 1720, at the parsonage of Selborne, in Hampshire (of which parish his grandfather, also Gilbert White, was then vicar), was the eldest son of John White, a barrister. Gilbert was educated at Basingstoke under Thomas Warton, the father of the two celebrated brothers, and in November, 1740, he went into residence at Oriel, Oxford (where he knew William Collins, the poet), from which college he obtained his testamur in 1743. Next year he became a fellow, and in 1747 took orders. In 1757 he stood unsuccessfully for the provostship at Oriel. Had he been successful we should hardly have had our *Natural History of Selborne*. A few months later the college living of Moreton-Pinckney, in North-

amptonshire, became vacant, and White presented it to himself, and filled it with a curate. He was still far from rich, having little beyond his fellowship and this living (about £200 a year). Eventually, in 1763, he inherited the small property of the Wakes at Selborne.

In 1751 White began to keep a garden calendar on pages of small letter-paper sheeted together; and the habit of observation and reflection, to which he had been attached from a boy, grew upon him daily. He was encouraged by the miscellaneous tracts of Benjamin Stillingfleet, and the similar journals of Scopoli. In 1767, during a visit to London, he got to know Pennant, and two years later Daines Barrington, and his letters to these two men on natural history subjects, to the former with a view to his forthcoming *British Zoology* (1768-70), form the staple, respectively, of the first (forty-four letters) and second parts (sixty-six letters) of White's *Selborne*. The *Antiquities* are comprised in twenty-six additional and unaddressed letters. The only complete edition published in the author's lifetime was issued in boards at the price of one guinea, in December, 1788, as *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne in the County of Southampton:* With Engravings, and an Appendix. London, 1789. 4to. The author's name is not on the titlepage, but it appears as Gil. White on p. v. Since then there have been, approximately, no less than eighty different editions, the best of them being Rennie's, in 1833, Leonard Jenyns's, 1843, Jardine's, 1853, Thomas Bell's, 1877, and Bowdler Sharpe's, 1900. White did not in the least regard himself as independent of books. His remarks show that he knew his Ray and Linnæus well, and was familiar also with the works of Derham and Willoughby, Benjamin Stillingfleet, George Edwards, and even the credulous Dr. Plot. Among the poets he quotes Shakespeare, Thomson, Virgil, and Lucretius. The disjointed character of his work is ex-

plained by the fact that his book was not composed from notes, but consists of the notes and observations themselves, jotted down at first-hand direct from nature, in the evenings, after hours of patient study in the open air.

Apart from his *Natural History,* White kept a naturalist's journal and calendar in great detail, excerpts from which were printed as *A Naturalist's Calendar, with Observations in Various Branches of Natural History,* in 1795. Two years before it appeared, Gilbert White died as peacefully as he had lived, unmarried, at the old house of the Wakes in the village street of Selborne, where his study, his kitchen, great parlour, and the room in which he breathed his last are still to be seen. A lowly headstone, bearing his initials, stands a few paces from the east of the chancel at Selborne Church. There are few places of historic interest to which pilgrims of the Anglo-Saxon race render more respectful tribute. Few men would be more astonished at this overpowering personal interest than the retiring and modest eighteenth-century clergyman—Gilbert White himself, whose book at the present day is so widely circulated, so splendidly edited, so sumptuously illustrated, and so comparatively little read!

The cult of the "shades of old Selborne so lonely and sweet" began with an article in *The New Monthly Magazine* of 1830, and of late years no self-respecting naturalist has failed[1] either to prelude or annotate the great forefather of the hamlet and the pioneer of all nature-study, open-air, simple-life, and back-to-the-land propaganda. Others have sought to explain the secret of Gilbert White's potency. They have pointed out with perfect justice that White always observes the right things and that he observes them in the right way. He is an observer not of dead

[1] Among such annotators may be mentioned Richard Jefferies, Frank Buckland, Grant Allen, J. Burroughs, Professor Newton, L. C. Miall, W. Warde Fowler, and R. Kearton.

leaves and dry bones, but *ad vivum*. He does not generalise from experience at large, but notes things down at the time. He loves circumstance, and indites of the peregrinations of a worm or a woodlouse with as much grave solemnity as if he were inscribing the perambulations of a royal personage in the Court Circular. Yet he knows that the most infallible way to be dull is to tell everything, and judiciously selects particulars of human interest. He thinks over each observation and conveys the result to us in such a fresh and unaffected manner that he communicates a large proportion of the enjoyment of the original observer. He is a frank, highly cultivated, open-air English gentleman, one of the most delightful blends of personality yet evolved in nature. All this and much more might be set down. But when all is said the charm of White's *Selborne* will yet be found to defy analysis.

Amongst the lineal descendants of Gilbert White would be included naturally Waterton and Buckland; but the most highly specialised, from a literary point of view, is Richard Jefferies. The descendant of an old stock of Wiltshire yeomen, Richard Jefferies was born at the ancestral grange of Coate, near Swindon, on November 6th, 1848. Except for the reading which he did for himself in one of the farm garrets, he had a scrambling education—the best part spent probably in mooning about the Wiltshire downs. He showed a natural bent to literature in its most commercial branches—advertising, reporting, and sensational novel writing. Most of his efforts in these departments are quite worthless. He first discovered his distinctive faculty in 1872, some two years before his marriage, when he contributed three letters to *The Times*, showing a most remarkable insight into the real condition of "The Wiltshire Labourer." His real vocation as the journalist, observer, and reporter of country life in all its aspects was henceforth marked out for him, though it was apparently with some reluctance that he gave up his cherished intention of chronicling the life of sentimental society in its "gilded saloons." His mature authorship dates from his settlement at Surbiton in 1877, and after an apprenticeship to agricultural

writing in the pages of *Fraser*, with his first substantial success as a rural chronicler in the volume published by Smith, Elder, in 1878 as *The Gamekeeper at Home*, a series of admirable sketches reprinted from *The Pall Mall Gazette*. From the same source followed in rapid succession *Wild Life in a Southern County* and *The Amateur Poacher*. In describing a gypsy and his lurcher, his snare, his appearance before the magistrates, or the gamekeeper, his larder, his difficulties and temptations, the troubles of the cottager again, the Sussex plough and the Southdown shepherd or old Luke the rabbit dealer, the farmers again in *The Toilers of the Field*, in all such bits of description Jefferies was unrivalled, he is reporting what he thoroughly knows. He writes as one by no means blind to the seamy side of life, yet in sympathy on the whole with the existing order and the established authorities. Residence in a London suburb, in a state of health already tending to decline, brought out strongly Jefferies' yearning for the ideal. From observation he progressed to aspiration, from the sporting naturalist of a southern county he aspired to be the poet naturalist of England. He put off the trapper and put on the larger humanities. Inordinate as the ambition appears, Jefferies succeeded. In many of the essays in *The Open Air* (1885), in *The Story of my Heart* (1883), in *After London* (1885), and *The Life of the Fields* (1884), containing *The Pageant of Summer*, he shows himself a stylist and an impressionist in prose of the first order. As it is necessary to know something of a continent to realise an island, so one must have knowledge of town to appreciate the country. The torrent of human life interested Jefferies fully as much as the wild currents of nature. Few writers have shown a more extraordinary development than he did. His ecstatic and somewhat mystical undersoul equipped him sincerely for that most dangerous and ambiguous of all literary rôles—that of the prose poet. Jefferies suffered much for his humanity, and died at Goring a worn and spent man in his thirty-ninth year on August 14th, 1887. He was buried in the fair cemetery of Broadwater, where the inland road turns coastward to Worthing. "Go there on a clear afternoon of May when the great sun is burning in the heaven and the wind (the wind that whispered its secrets to Bevis) is blowing softly through the grass, and you will find the whole cemetery ringing with the song of birds, thrushes loud on the neighbouring trees, wood-pigeons and

rooks flying swiftly overhead, swallows passing and repassing, butterflies and humble-bees flitting to and fro, exactly that hum of awakening life which Jefferies so incomparably described. And here, among the birds and bees and flowers, within sight of the downs, within hearing of the sea, lies that passionate heart whose self-told *Story* shall be read and reread, centuries hence, with tears of pity and admiration."

The naturalist in Jefferies had become merged in the pagan and neo-Hellenist, and later in the enthusiast, the communist, and the mystic (before he reached the more esoteric stage his idealism had much in common with that of Edward Carpenter, the author of *Towards Democracy*, *The Simplification of Life*, and *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*). The interpretation of nature in accordance with Gilbert White's legacy has been carried on with more fidelity by Thoreau and Burroughs, and in quite recent years by W. H. Hudson. In the beautiful descriptions and vivid episodes of *Downland Hampshire Days* and *Green Mansions*, while clearly sustaining the best traditions of Selborne and Coate, Mr. Hudson has gone farther than either of his predecessors in emphasising the human values of the animal world. Such interpretation is conquering a new kingdom for the realms of Literature.

III

THE contact between Belles Lettres and controversial literature becomes much narrower as philosophy becomes more specialised, and it is possible henceforth merely to indicate one or two of the chief lines and instruments of development. A link between John Locke and the later common-sense school, as also between the old Hellenism of Marlowe and Chapman and the neo-Hellenism of Keats and Morris, is supplied by Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (grandson of the shifty Chancellor of Charles II.), the shy, polite, and studious author of *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions and Times* (3 vols., 1711), who regarded the factions of his day with bewilderment, and died abroad early in 1713, *æt.* 42. The genteelest of

writers, and most amiable, temperate, and virtuous of noblemen, the moral sense or conscience which was the pivot of Shaftesbury's system was attacked both by the orthodox Berkeley and the unorthodox Bernard Mandeville. Berkeley objected to a vague moral beauty unconnected with religion. Mandeville, the eighteenth-century Hobbes, who looks to the bad rather than the good instincts of humanity to explain the distinctions of human society, laughs in *The Fable of the Bees* (1723) at the delicate philosophy of the noble recluse, who expects goodness in our species as we do a sweet taste in grapes and China oranges, of which, if any of them are sour, we boldly pronounce that they are not come to that perfection their nature is capable of. To Shaftesbury's optimism are for the most part clearly cognate the leading ideas of Bolingbroke, Pope, Francis Hutcheson, Reid, Robertson, and that common-sense philosophy which is so typical of the eighteenth century, and coloured its religious sentiments so profoundly. George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, author of the famous line, "Westward the course of empire takes its way," to whom Pope ascribed "every virtue under heaven," and to whom Swift's Vanessa bequeathed her savings, was one of the most delightful and virtuous characters in the range of literary history. As a prose master even, he had not a little of the charm of style which we attribute so readily to a breather of the same air with Swift and Goldsmith. His great book on *The Principles of Human Knowledge*[1] (1710-11) was suggested by religious considerations. Troubled by the advance of materialism, Berkeley evolved his ingenious theory of immaterialism to pursue the enemy into their own country. Materialism, he argued, was upon analysis no less philosophically than morally unsound; and his great discovery,

[1] He defended the theory of this treatise later in a series of *Dialogues*.

that *esse* is the equivalent of *percipi,* alone entitles him to a foremost place in the history of speculation. Matter cannot be proved to have any substantial existence apart from the mind. He did not see, when he propounded this "ideal" theory, that Hume would apply this same kind of analytic operation to spiritual as well as material considerations. The life of this amiable apostle and Platonic enthusiast (in an age when enthusiasm was anathema) came to an end at Oxford in January, 1753.

THE great diversion of the century was made, however, not against the materialists, but against the deists. Deriving indirectly from Kett, Marlowe, Lord Herbert, Hobbes, Dr. Clarke, and even to some extent the virtuous Locke, the immediate foundation of the cult in the closing years of the seventeenth century was the *Christianity not Mysterious* (1696) of John Toland, who insisted upon the necessity of absolute demonstration in matters of religious belief—the measure of progress, he assumed, being the elimination of all mystery and superstition. The movement was extended upon parallel lines by William Wollaston and by Matthew Tindal (1657—1733), of All Souls', who was perhaps the most important of the English deists. His views as to the antiquity of Christianity, the weakness of all explanations as to why it was concealed from primitive humanity, the extent to which it was anticipated by other religions, and the inconsistency between dogmatic theology and all ideas of development proved so unpalatable that they were destroyed in MS. by one of the fathers of the Anglican Church, who preferred that method to mere refutation. Thomas Morgan, one of the pioneers of modern historical science, as applied to biblical interpretation, and Anthony Collins, in his *Discourses on Free Thinking,* contented themselves mainly with pointing out the cruces and difficulties, and the varieties of readings and explanations—especially in the Old Testament. Thomas Woolston, on the other hand, directed his discourses boldly against the Prophecies and Miracles, which he approached with something of the homely and facete vein that Mark Twain was many years later to apply to the victory scored by Elijah over the prophets of Baal. His levity was miscalculated, and poor Woolston was put to confusion by a

gaoler who kept him in close confinement until he died in 1733. He was subsequently refuted at considerable length by Pearce, Chandler, and Thomas Sherlock, who, deriving the hint either from Bunyan or the earlier Richard Bernard (*Isle of Man*), anticipated Paley in appealing to a British jury. "Judge: What say you? Are the apostles guilty of giving false evidence in the case of the resurrection of Jesus, or are they not guilty? Foreman: Not guilty, my lud."

A more intellectual apologist was Daniel Waterland (1683—1740), a Cambridge man of profound learning and acuteness, trained to clash with such minds as those of Bentley, Hoadley, and Archbishop Sherlock, his contemporaries, who defended the Triune God with vigour and trenchancy in his *Vindication of Christ's Divinity* (1719) and *Doctrine of the Trinity Asserted* (1734) against the common-sense and scripture theories of Dr. Samuel Clarke. A not less able and far more spiritual defender of the faith was William Law, the recluse of King's Cliffe, whose *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1726) was destined to prove one of the great quickeners of a generation not particularly responsive to holiness. Yet this little book proved an overmatch both for Johnson and Wesley, and seventy years later served as a model for the *Practical View of Christianity* by William Wilberforce. Law was not, of course, a party man, but he was a strong Churchman, and his answers to Tindal and his *Remarks upon . . . The Fable of the Bees* show him a close reasoner if not a caustic controversialist. But the Vauban of Anglican defence in the eighteenth century, "The Bacon of Anglican Theology," was by general consent Joseph Butler (1692—1752). Son of a prosperous linen-draper and nonconformist of Wantage, Joseph deserted dissent for Oxford only to find that university frivolous. He did not intend to remain long upon the lower rungs of the ladder of promotion, and the mighty sermons he preached soon spelt unmistakably "preferment." Rich livings in some abundance relieved him from sordid cares while he elaborated his "immortal" work *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed*, which appeared in 1736 and secured the author a position of confidence about Queen Caroline. One of the last requests of this broad-minded princess to her much distraught husband was to "promote Butler." In 1738 he accepted under spirited protest the lean see of Bristol; subsequently he was offered Canterbury, but preferred the "deeper manger" of Durham

with all its principalities intact. This was just two years before his death on June 16th, 1752. A bulwark of common sense and a dripstone of disapproval against every species of enthusiasm in religion, Butler represents Protestantism at one of its most logical and arid altitudes. Assuming a belief in a beneficent deity, and an acceptance of natural religion on the part of his readers, he demonstrates to the fashionable deistic philosopher of the day that if revealed religion perished, natural religion might well quake with fear. He addressed himself to the doubts of his own age. Barely a generation passed before we find people asking whether Butler did not raise more doubts than he stilled. This much we must admit of our redoubtable Ductor Dubitantium: he postulates from the first the existence of God and the known course of nature. These dates accepted, he goes on deducing and proving to his heart's content—collecting the title-deeds, but forgetting in the heat of pursuit and litigation to pay much attention to the cultivation of the Christian estate itself. His whole cast of mind is practical, logical, and moral, rather than speculative or spiritual. Butler's chiefest rival among the literary personalities of the Georgian Church is William Warburton (1698—1779), the contriver of a mammoth theological Dunciad in the footnotes of which small deists are impaled, as it were, upon skewers. A slovenly bishop (of Gloucester) who was always reading when he should have been ruling, Warburton's ill-digested learning and dogmatic arrogance, the deference he exacted even from the formidable Pope. and the abject subservience from the formal Hurd, combine to present to us a singular and almost grotesque personality. His book upon *The Divine Legation of Moses* (1740) is one of the strangest literary conglomerates upon record. It is clearly to the interest of the priestly caste, argues the Bishop, to invent a future world to redress the balance of the present. Moses abstained from any such invention. Therefore Moses was a true prophet. Q.E.D. As Sherlock and Butler had answered Tindal, Woolston, and Collins, so in a later generation Paley and Watson were to answer Voltaire, Hume, and Thomas Paine. Cast in the mould of divines such as Secker, Sherlock, Butler, and Principal Robertson, William Paley (1743—1805), the very incarnation of an ecclesiastical era, sets himself to answer the objectors to a divine faith by rule of three in arithmetic. Look, he says in the *Horæ Paulinæ*, at the undersigned coincidences,

add them up and then take away the number of contradictions between Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and the balance in favour of Christianity will amount to just 4.7. Or, again (in his *Evidences*), what had the apostles to make out of representing Christ as a thaumaturgist? Would a sensible Englishman deliberately incur a cruel death for a vague, uncertain, hearsay belief? The thing is incredible. Such lucidity is admirable. As a counsel for the defence Paley is a very warm man indeed —a solid, ineradicable Yorkshireman and archdeacon.

Of all the absentee bishops of the period there is not one who steered clearer of his own diocese (Llandaff) or more persistently broke the tenth commandment by coveting the diocese of his neighbour than Bishop Watson (1737—1816), the last apologist of the old school, and from a literary point of view one of the very best. His *Apology for Christianity* was followed by that *Apology for the Bible* which elicited from George III. the notorious, "What, what! Apologise for the Bible. What!" But the good monarch was no Grecian, still less a philosopher, or he would have recognised that Watson's *Apology* was a perfect epitome of the entire churchmanship of the eighteenth century.

Among the most serviceable editions of Burke are the eight-volume editions of 1823, 1827, and 1852, the Bohn edition of 1853, and the two inexpensive editions commenced in the Standard Library and World's Classics. A good critical edition is a desideratum. The Clarendon Press has issued Selections,* and there are biographical sketches by Sir James Prior,* Chadwick, T. Macknight, G. Croly, A. A. Fry, Vaughan, M. Arnold, H. J. Nicoll, E. A. Pankhurst, Pillans, W. Willis, Prof. Graham, and John Morley.* The career of Cobbett, as reconstructed from the inflammatory pages of *The Political Register*, in which he preached the cause of reform, is to be studied in the *Life* of Edward Smith, and the *Life as told in his Writings* by E. Irving Carlyle (1904).

The conflict of abstract thought in the eighteenth century may be pursued through the pages of Buckle, Gibbon's *Autobiography*, Paine (ed. Moncure Conway), Bentham, Huxley's Hume, Lecky, Abbey and Overton's works on the Church in the eighteeenth century, Stephen's *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*,* and A. W. Benn's *English Rationalism* (1906).*

There are excellent Lives with studies of Adam Smith by

R. B. Haldane (1885), John Rae (1895), and Dr. Cunningham (1904). An attempt to exhibit the contribution he made to economics in due perspective is made by Arnold Toynbee in his *Industrial Revolution.* According to Toynbee the development of Economic Science in England has four chief landmarks. The first is the publication in 1776 of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations,* in which he investigates the causes of wealth and aims at the substitution of industrial freedom for a system of restriction. The production of wealth concerned him to the exclusion of the immediate welfare of man. This was spoken on the very eve of the great Industrial Revolution. A second stage is marked by the *Essay on Population* (1798), of Thomas Robert Malthus (1766—1834), which may be considered the product of that revolution already in full swing. Adam Smith had concentrated all his attention on a large production. Malthus directed his inquiries not to the causes of wealth, but to the causes of poverty, and found them in his theory of population—namely, that by an inexorable law of nature population tends ever to outstrip the means of subsistence. A third stage is indicated by the *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817), in which David Ricardo (1772—1823) seeks to ascertain the laws of the distribution of wealth. Adam Smith had shown how wealth could be produced under a system of industrial freedom; Ricardo showed how wealth is distributed under such a system, a problem which could not have occurred to any one before his time. The fourth stage is marked by John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), in which, after pointing out the distinction between the laws of production and those of distribution, the writer goes on to try and solve the problem how wealth *ought* to be distributed. Since Mill's day a fifth stage has been reached in which, under the auspices of Toynbee, Marshall, Ashley, Webb, and Cunningham, the tendency has been more and more to study economics from the historical point of view.

CHAPTER XI

MINOR NOVELISTS, MAINLY ROMANTIC: FROM "OTRANTO" TO "HAJJI BABA"

"Mrs. Radcliffe makes her readers twice children; and from the dim and shadowy veil which she draws over the objects of her fancy, forces us to believe all that is strange and next to impossible, of their mysterious agency."—HAZLITT, *English Comic Writers.*

Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*—The *Mysteries* of Ann Radcliffe—"Monk" Lewis—"Melmoth" Maturin—*Vathek* and its author—"Anastasius" Hope—J. J. Morier—"Zeluco" Moore—William Godwin—*Frankenstein.*

IN 1763, Horace Walpole, whose waking thoughts were mainly occupied with the Castle at Strawberry and villa Gothic generally (he was then forty-six) had a bad Gothic dream. From this inspiration, in the course of two months' writing between "tea-time" and six o'clock, he spun the preposterous mediæval nightmare to which he gave the name of *The Castle of Otranto.* Now the universal verdict would be Selwyn's opinion, that *Otranto* is too childish to make even a schoolgirl yawn, and the machinery of the colossal casque, and the armour that drops blood, and the sentimental tale intertwined with it all, simply bore the present-day reader to extinction. Yet *The Castle of Otranto* undoubtedly set a fashion for mediæval legend, diablerie, mystery, horror, and Gothic decoration in fiction which led directly by the route of Ann Radcliffe to the Waverley Novels, and even to Victor Hugo.

The Tales of Mystery and of Terror that came over

the spirit of the dream of English Romance between Sterne and Scott, an interval of between thirty and forty years, are now very little cared about. From *The Castle of Otranto* to *Melmoth* one thinks but little of those "horrid tales," save as having contributed to the lambent satire of *Northanger Abbey*. Walpole and Clara Reeve started the fashion of mediæval mystery and romance, and old Godwin and his daughter kept it going well on into the nineteenth century, but the great masters and mistress of the *genre* were Mrs. Radcliffe, "Monk" Lewis, and Charles Robert Maturin.

Ann Ward was born in London on July 9th, 1764. Her parents were tradespeople, but she always claimed remote descent from the famous Dutch family of De Witt, a representative of which came over with the Vermuydens, and married into the Chelseden family. After two comparative failures, Mrs. Radcliffe brought out *The Romance of the Forest* in 1791. It was followed by the still more successful *Mysteries of Udolpho* of 1794, which was eulogised by Sheridan and Fox, and brought the authoress the then almost unprecedented sum for a novel of £500. She was even more successful with *The Italian* (1797), which is the best of her works from the point of view of construction of character, though it is inferior in the Radcliffean qualities of moonlight mystery and Blue Danube style of landscape. At the moment of her greatest triumph, which Scott himself always professed to admire greatly, Mrs. Radcliffe had the strength of mind to retire. She produced a single volume of Rhineland *Travel* in 1795, which is noticeable rather for being sensible and well written than pre-eminently picturesque, but beyond that lived a secluded life, journeying round the coast with her husband, and "devouring" the novels of other people, until her death on February 7th, 1823.

Her real gifts have been, we think, to a certain extent

misapprehended. She wrote an excellent style, rhythmic and musical in a high degree, and she was one of the first to excel in sentimental landscape, the landscape which is lighted up, like the stage in a melodrama, to suit the particular conjuncture of the hero's or heroine's affairs as the case may be; and, appropriately enough, this landscape is more often than not of a Salvator Rosa complexion. Attempt at verisimilitude there is practically none, for her landscapes are of a pearliness and verdure quite foreign to the south of Europe, in which most of her plots are laid. Yet her efforts in this direction are seldom wholly destitute of charm.

Her manipulation of mystery and horror was the visible attraction to most of her contemporary readers, no doubt. To the modern reader, it must be admitted, her dialogue and characterisation (except in *The Italian,* in which Schedoni undoubtedly makes a new departure), her plots and carefully calculated machinery of jangling chains, mysterious music, echoing vaults, sliding panels, and sinister bandit barons, appear almost inconceivably and childishly pinchbeck—all the sensational and blood-curdling business has been done so enormously better by writers like Wilkie Collins and in books such as *Jane Eyre* and *Uncle Silas.* To the generation which had gaped over the helmet in *The Castle of Otranto,* it was, of course, a sparkling novelty, and scholars such as Warton and Crabbe Robinson sat up all night over *Udolpho* just as in the 'eighties of the nineteenth century all Oxford (and Cambridge, too, no doubt) went mad over *She.* So puissant in literature is the power of novelty. The obscurity of her later years and her private mystery, whatever it was, which led her to seclude herself (as in the case of Borrow, her fame had been dead and buried for nearly a quarter of a century before she actually deceased), have had the effect of unduly diminishing her literary consideration.

Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775—1818) was, as a novelist, a mere creature of Mrs. Radcliffe's. The son of a wealthy official with estates in Jamaica, he was educated at Westminster and Christ Church, and then proceeded to Weimar, and subsequently to The Hague, with a view perhaps to diplomatic service. He was, however, introduced to Goethe, and he drank deep draughts of German romanticism and poetry. He began to shape romantic ballads inspired by the inevitable Bürger, and commenced a novel with supernatural machinery and spurious mediæval and legendary colouring. The novel dragged, however, as we learn from his amusing letters to his mother, until the appearance of *Udolpho,* which gave him just the requisite stimulus. Lewis had an immense appetite for demonology and "Gothic" patterns, but little taste, no humour, and less than no sense of historical propriety. The result is seen in the uncanny extravaganza which he gave to the world in 1795 under the title of *Ambrosia, or The Monk.* It gained Lewis a world-wide notoriety, and he was henceforth known in society as "Monk" Lewis. He bought a seat in Parliament, but was seldom seen there, for he was writing a transpontine drama called *The Castle Spectre,* the success of the season of 1797. The "brushwood splendour" of this good-natured fopling (as Lockhart calls Lewis) may have dazzled Scott for a moment in 1798. At any rate, Scott was flattered by the Monk's notice at Edinburgh, and was delighted to contribute to the Ballad Miscellany, largely composed of specimens of German *Volkslieder* and versions of "the German diablerie," Lewis brought out in 1799-1801 as *Tales of Terror* and *Tales of Wonder.* Byron later, during the riotous days of the Regency, liked to be seen in the company of Monk Lewis, though he professed that he bored him not a little. In 1815, however, Lewis sailed away to his Jamaica property, and died on a return journey in 1818. His narrative

Journal of a West Indian Proprietor is to-day by far the most readable of his numerous books.

Charles Robert Maturin, born at Dublin in 1782, was the grandson of Gabriel Jasper Maturin, Swift's successor as Dean of St. Patrick's. He wrote three novels under the pen-name of Dennis Jasper Murphy: these were *Montorio, The Wild Irish Boy,* and *The Milesian Chief.* His position as a parson made it almost impossible at that time to avow a novel. In 1816, through the kindness of Scott and Byron, he actually got his romantic play of *Bertram* on the boards of Drury Lane, and owing to the acting of Kean, this strange devil-dodging fustian actually made a success and brought in the author a cool thousand pounds. His chance of promotion in the Church was gone; but Maturin managed to keep up his fame, if not his income, by two novels, both of which exhibit some signs of more or less decided genius—*Women* (1818), from which he was with difficulty persuaded by Scott, in an admirable letter full of ripe, mellow wisdom, from incorporating a savage retort upon S. T. Coleridge, who had vented his unacted spleen against *Bertram* in the *Biographia Literaria;* and *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), a singular compound of Faust and the Wandering Jew, in which the sense of mysterious and supernatural awe is powerfully evoked, though the effect of the story is almost annihilated by the extraordinary involution of plot within plot by which the narrative is arrested and confused. His last story was a fanciful historical romance called *The Albigenses,* which appeared shortly before Maturin's death at Dublin on October 30th, 1824. *The Milesian Chief* and *The Albigenses* both had a perceptible effect upon the romance as developed by Sir Walter Scott and the prolific G. P. R. James. *Melmoth* exercised a parallel influence in France, where it was admired by and suggested a theme to the immortal Balzac. Improvident and impecunious

to the last degree and fond of the most grotesque display, the inextricable weirdness of the man and his work have given a perhaps somewhat adventitious vitality to *Bertram* and *Melmoth.*

Born at Fonthill in Wiltshire on October 1st, 1760, the son of a fabulously wealthy alderman and Lord Mayor of London, William Beckford succeeded in 1781 to a fortune of considerably over a million—a fortune far greater then, relatively speaking, than it would be now. Beckford's moderate equipment of brain scarcely proved equal to a position for which his education had done little to fit him. He wrote *Vathek,* however, married an earl's daughter, sat in Parliament without making any impression, wandered about Europe, mainly in Portugal, and at Fonthill and Bath created the impression of being a very eccentric and somewhat morose voluptuary and virtuoso, with strange alternating manias for hermetic seclusion and profuse display. Addison in *The Vision of Mirza,* Johnson in *Rasselas,* James Ridley in *Tales of the Genii* (1764), had all used the Oriental tale with success as a first-rate vehicle for a story with a moral. Beckford in his story of a grandson of the illustrious Haroun al Raschid eliminated the moral and introduced a double portion of local colour, voluptuous imagery, and Oriental extravagance. The sublimity, descriptive wealth, and correctness of *Vathek* fascinated Byron, who (though it can hardly be claimed that he was a competent judge) called it a perfect Eastern tale.

Another *richissime virtuoso* who wrote a novel of which Byron condescended to approve was Thomas Hope (1770—1831), eldest son of a magnificent Amsterdam merchant (who formed a palace of Dutch art at Haarlem) of Scottish descent. As a young man he spent eight years in sketching architectural remains in Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Syria, and among the isles of the Levant; and during these

extended artistic and Bohemian *wanderjahre* he collected the materials for his remarkable romance of *Anastasius,* which first appeared anonymously in 1819. The autobiography of a Greek who, to escape the consequence of villainies, runs away to sea, turns renegade, fights for the Turks, and encounters every kind of vicissitude and adventure, supposed to have been written about 1795, *Anastasius* forms a picturesque narrative of variety and originality, though its vitality is not a little marred by the style, which is too sententious and rhetorical for the effects needed. On its first appearance it was judged to be beyond the power of Hope and was confidently ascribed to Byron, who lamented first that such a book was *not* his, and secondly that it *was* Hope's.

Extremely interesting though the material of *Anastasius* is, it loses by the method of presentation, still more by the fact that it has been completely eclipsed by another Oriental autobiography which appeared within five years of it—the incomparable *Hajji Baba,* to have read which together with Lane, Curzon, Lady Hester Stanhope, and *Eothen,* is to know the East in its ancient dress as few save the most instructed and observant travellers can hope to know it.

Born and nurtured in an Oriental atmosphere, the author of *Hajji,* James J. Morier, was one of the three sons of Isaac Morier, British Consul at Stamboul. In 1807, a young man of twenty-eight, James was at a loose end in Constantinople when, as a return for his father's hospitality, Sir Harford Jones, then *en route* for Teheran as British envoy extraordinary, consented to take him as private secretary. In May, 1809, Morier set out on his return journey from Teheran in company with the Persian envoy to the Court of St. James's, Mirza Abul Hassan, whom he thus had for months under the closest observation. How well this opportunity was utilised all who

have delighted in the Mirza Firouz of *Hajji* will appreciate. While at home he wrote a Persian *Journey* and then, in 1811, returned to Persia again with Sir Gore Ouseley, where he remained as an observer and for part of the time Chargé d'Affaires during six more years. Nine years after his final return appeared, in 1824, the ripened product of his Persian experiences and reflections through the mouthpiece of that inimitable rogue and Persian Gil Blas, *Hajji Baba,* barber of Ispahan. It was followed in 1828 by *Hajji Baba in England,* by some indifferent novels, and finally by two Scott-inspired romances of considerable merit, *Zohrab* and *Ayesha, the Maid of Kars.*

In order to illustrate Persian life in a great variety of phases, Morier, in *Hajji,* makes an unblushing adventurer, a thievish and scoundrelly but not unkindly charlatan, narrate the history of his career from its beginning in the shop of his father, an Ispahan barber, down to the point at which he becomes chief secretary to the Persian ambassador, about to set out for England. Without effort, in the most natural flow of mildly exciting but always racily expressed and interesting narrative, which only at one point (where Zeenab, a Kurdish slave, of exceptional beauty, who has thrown a spell over the egotistical Hajji, is transported into the Shah's harem with consequences fatal to her thread of life) rises within measurable distance of tragedy, the whole panorama of Oriental life, nowhere, perhaps, more unchanging than in Iran, is skilfully unrolled before us like a Persian carpet. It is infinitely funny and amusing, true human comedy, and so thoroughly life-like and Persian that the Shah's ambassador at St. James's is said to have remonstrated more than once upon the scarifying *truth* of the satire.

Hajji is a wonderful *tour de force,* true to the spirit without neglecting the letter. The figures are alive, many of them indeed are unsparing portraits, and by all who

know the Eastern rascality and imposture by actual experience the picture is said to be as exact as it is vivacious. After a long diplomatic career, Morier died at Brighton, "a good-looking and good-humoured Tory," on March 19th, 1849.

Almost contemporary with *Vathek* was the *Zeluco* of Dr. John Moore (1729—1802), the father of the hero of Coruña, the friend, physician, and editor of Smollett, and one of the first literary correspondents and admirers of Robert Burns. After a varied and interesting professional career in the Low Countries, in Paris, America, in Glasgow, and in the south of Europe as guardian of the young Duke of Hamilton, Moore brought out two well-informed *Views* of society in Western Europe and Italy (1779—1781), followed by the novel, largely inspired by Smollett, to which he gave the name of *Zeluco*—the name being that of the only son of a noble Sicilian family, accomplished and fascinating, but spoilt by maternal indulgence, and at length rioting in dissipation, first in Italy, afterwards in Spain and the West Indies, and ending in a state of chronic misery. The best part of the book is occupied by the conversations and quarrels of two gentlemen's gentlemen—one a lowlander and the other a highlander. The book evidently influenced Byron, who first conceived Childe Harold as a kind of poetical Zeluco.

Another novelist of the last decade of the eighteenth century who combines the mystery tale with the doctrinaire element in a most remarkable manner was William Godwin. Born at Wisbech on March 3rd, 1756, Godwin was brought up as a Sandemanian or extreme Calvinist and a Tory, went through a Presbyterian college course, and did not abandon his primitive beliefs until he had been in the ministry for over five years.

In 1797 and 1799 respectively Godwin brought out two remarkably striking novels, which will probably do more

to transmit his name to posterity than his ingenious but somewhat shallow and wholly impracticable political theories. The first of these is a story of a youthful secretary of humble birth, *Caleb Williams,* whose morbid curiosity leads him first to suspect his master, Falkland, of a murder; then, after a Hamlet-like course of probing a deadly wound, to pursue the search for *pièces de conviction* in such an unmistakable manner as to leave Falkland no option but the "bare bodkin." The rest of the book is concerned with the relentless persecution of Caleb by Falkland, who values his reputation above everything. The didactic purpose of the book, to expose the shortcoming of justice and the evils of aristocratic power, is absorbed in the genuine interest excited by the story. The invisible net which the local magnate, Falkland, is able to weave round the unfortunate Caleb is suggested with great skill. The moral of the second story, *St. Leon,* is the inability of the elixir of life and philosopher's stone, conveying immortal youth and inexhaustible riches, to confer happiness upon a creature so finite as man. But here again the doctrinaire element of the story evaporates amid the elaboration of an ingenious plot, the central motive of which Sir Walter Besant utilised with considerable skill in his story of *The Ten Years' Tenant.*

Apart from his stories, Godwin was an indefatigable compiler, biographer, literary antiquary (almost after the Isaac D'Israeli type), and even writer of children's books. He committed the most revolutionary and subversive theories to paper with all the imperturbable journalistic industry of a Defoe, and his logical clearness and calmness enabled him to exercise an extraordinary influence over authors infinitely wider or deeper than himself, notably Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Bulwer Lytton, Hazlitt, and a host of minor writers. Neither his industry, his philosophy, nor his inexorable logic enabled him to put

money in his purse; and he continued without shame to sponge upon his admirers, until Murray, Rogers, and a few veteran Whigs managed to get the extinct firebrand a small sinecure as yeoman usher of the Exchequer in 1833. He died three years later, on April 7th, 1836.

The occult element in *St. Leon* and some German ghost stories, read during a wet week at Diodati, on the Lake of Geneva, in company with her husband, the poet Shelley, and Lord Byron, inspired the weird tale which Godwin's daughter Mary (1797—1851) wrote in 1816, and submitted for publication in 1817. *Frankenstein* is the name of a student at Ingolstadt, who constructs from charnel-house material and dissecting-room experience a human form, eight feet high, into which, after continued experiments, he succeeds in breathing the breath of life. The monster has muscular strength, vital energy, and strong animal passions, but no soul. It longs for animal love and animal sympathy, but is shunned by all. Powerful for evil, and soon rendered sensible of its horrible appearance and loathsome deformity, the monster seeks with persistence to inflict retribution on its creator. Such is the story of a "modern Prometheus" which Mary Shelley seeks to tell with very little reality, but with a plentiful amount of high-flown sentiment and verbiage. The same or a similar motive employed by Mr. Wells in *Dr. Moreau's Island* becomes horrible in the extreme. In *Frankenstein,* vaguely as the whole conception is realised from the first, it loses what slight reality it possesses when the monster begins to speak, and the story becomes insufferably wearisome and mawkish. Mrs. Shelley's remaining *Tales and Stories,* collected by Dr. Garnett in 1891, are even more languid and impalpable—*Contes d'Hoffmann,* with a difference.

CHAPTER XII

CHATTERTON AND BLAKE

"The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him."—*Adonais.*

"Blake's poems have been sold hitherto only in manuscript. I never read them; but a friend at my desire procured the 'Sweep Song.' There is one to a tiger, which I have heard recited, beginning—

"'Tiger, tiger, burning bright,
Thro' the desarts of the night,'

which is glorious, but, alas! I have not the book; for the man is flown whither I know not—to Hades or a Mad House. But I must look upon him as one of the most extraordinary persons of the age."—LAMB *to B. Barton*, 1824.

Sham antiques—The Ossianic imposture—Chatterton and the Rowley forgeries—England's unique mystic—William Blake.

FROM 1660 to 1760 English thought was occupied under such leadership as that of Locke, Dryden, Congreve, Pope, Addison, Swift, Bolingbroke, in getting rid of the last relics of feudal barbarism. The Crown, the Parliament, the manor, and the old penal code were left, it is true; the social habits, arts, faith, religion, and letters of the old mediæval world were irrevocably gone—things past and remote. This consummation was finally assured by the confirmation given to the modern *régime* by the ultimate failure of the young Chevalier and the Jacobite reactionaries in 1745. The result was a prompt change in the

sentiment of the time. The old order of things no sooner ceased to be formidable than it commenced to be picturesque. The triumph of urban refinement and the self-gratulation of common sense was followed in infallible sequence by the awakening of a new curiosity about the mysterious eld. The Augustan age in its zeal for rationality, civism, and trim parterres had neglected wholly the wild freshness of an age when literature was a wildflower that grew on the common.

The world began to be conscious of this even while Voltaire and Pope were at the very height of their renown. A strong revulsion of feeling was waiting to find expression, even as now, after a century of triumphant mechanical and industrial development, a strong current is setting in the direction of a simpler and less encumbered ideal of living. Rousseau first laid the axe to the root of this over-elaboration of human life. What the men of the classical period believed in, he reversed and denied. What they admired, he rejected. Back from the effeminate over-civilised south to the rude and unsophisticated north. from white to swarthy, from noontide to dawn. Back from books and formulas to mankind. From the town to the country. From the plains and fertile valleys to the mountain-peaks and the pine-woods. From the cities where men wax rich and accumulate luxuries to the earlier and more primitive moods of earth.

The happiest communities were now to be found, it was thought, not in Southern or Western Europe, but in dim outlying regions, in the Hebrides or Iceland, in secret recesses of Central America, safe from Spanish avarice, under the glow of the Aurora Borealis, in the land of the midnight sun! Decentralisation, in short, began to be the *dernier cri* even in literature. We must go not to Italy but to the Highlands for our poetic emotions, we must avoid

the classic coffee-houses and the classic academies and go to the street corners in search of Volkspoesie: a mediæval chest and a yellow parchment were for a season to be regarded as the surest guarantee of poetic pre-eminence.

Some such revulsion of feeling as this, not universal of course, but extending widely among the leisured and cultivated classes, can alone explain some of the phenomena of the second half of the eighteenth century. This "prosaic" eighteenth century at its midmost, far from being so wholly unpoetic as it is commonly described, was in reality athirst for new imaginative sensations. How else are we to explain the powerful enthusiasm which awaited and welcomed the Ossianic poems, the *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* as published by Bishop Percy, in 1765, the archæological enthusiasm of the Wartons, Hurd, Ritson, Tyrrwhitt, George Ellis, and George Steevens, the Celtic poems of Gray, the "Rowley Poems" of Chatterton, the sentimentalities of Beattie and Bowles, and finally the almost anarchical apocalypse of William Blake? Not many ages (certainly not our own, for example) would have given such a good reception to so many novel and divergent projections of pure literature by writers most of whom were far in advance of their own age; yet without whom we should scarcely have had Wordsworth or Coleridge, Scott, Keats, or Rossetti.

The cordiality of the age of Johnson for these strange experiments is to be explained largely, no doubt, by the fact that the manifestation was tempered in each particular instance to suit the uninitiated palate of the period. Real translations from Celtic or Gaelic, such as those of Lady Charlotte Guest or Lady Gregory, would have been wholly unintelligible, "monstrous," and "disgusting" to contemporaries of Walpole and Mason. They were capable of assimilating the mountain rivulet only after it had been

carefully prepared and bottled for their use by James Macpherson.

A crofter's son, born in 1736, Macpherson published his first *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* in June, 1760, under the auspices of the Dioscuri of Scottish Letters at that epoch, Robert Blair and John Home, author of *Douglas.* These two worthies had come across Macpherson, then a poor tutor, in 1759, and had been greatly impressed by his, very imperfect, knowledge of Gaelic, which they regarded (justly enough, as later explorers have proved) as the key to a literature rich in Celtic fantasy. Macpherson had collected some of its treasures, and although his studies never took him beyond the outer courts of the temple, he caught an echo of new intonations and the sound of some strange names that were to catch the ear of Europe. With this imperfect substitute for inspiration he commenced the preparation of those mountain monotones which were eventually to assume the form of a species of epic of prose poetry—contained in the six books of *Fingal* and the eight books of *Temora,* which he alleged to be a paraphrase of a poem composed by Ossian about 250 A. D. There is little doubt now that the work was almost wholly spurious, and that Macpherson was the slave of the same curious mania for deception which we trace in Psalmanazar, Chatterton, Ireland, Robert Surtees, and Fiona Macleod.

The extraordinary thing is the way in which this "Poesie du Nord" thrilled the taste of the cultured world with a new emotion, almost deceived Gray, threw the republic of letters into the awkward dilemma of regarding Macpherson either as a brilliant impostor or an uninspired drudge, moved the sceptical Gibbon to speak of the "elegant genius of Ossian," captivated the wonder-years of Herder, Goethe, Schiller, Bürger, Chateaubriand, nay of the great Napoleon himself, gave the title-name (Oscar) to a new dynasty, and directly inspired the muses of Blake

and Byron, the mænad of Walt Whitman, and the Mrs. Nickleby muse of Martin Tupper.

As Macpherson caricatured Celtic epic and Nahum Tate desecrated Shakespeare, as Percy trimmed and embellished our beautiful wilding ballads of ancient days; so Chatterton evolved a great poet of the time of Edward IV. and a language that never was heard by land or sea out of his own inner consciousness—all for the benefit of this "unpoetical age."

The son of a poor schoolmaster and descendant of a line of sextons at the beautiful fourteenth and fifteenth century romance in stone known as St. Mary Redcliff, Bristol, Thomas Chatterton was born in that city on November 20th, 1752. A boy of peculiar temper, not particularly intelligent, but passionate, secretive, and not conspicuous for telling the truth, he was admitted a scholar at Colston's School in 1760, and remained for nearly seven years a bluecoat boy. In the meantime he had become very studious, perused antiquities and old English poetry with a precocious ardour, and poured over a number of old documents from the muniment room at St. Mary's, which had been stored in the lumber-room in his mother's house. In December, 1762, he wrote his first poem, *On the Last Epiphany,* and two years later produced the first of his sham antiques, *Elinoure and Juga,* with which he imposed upon the usher in his school and other amateur antiquaries of the town; while in 1767 he victimised an ambitious pewterer with a fictitious pedigree, and in 1768 hoaxed the whole city with a description from an old MS. of the opening of Bristol bridge in 1248. Meanwhile, in July, 1767, he had been bound apprentice for seven years to a Bristol attorney, named John Lambert, under whom his servitude was galling. The poet slept with the footboy and took his meals in the kitchen. Yet among these sordid surroundings he conceived and planned the marvellous

series of poems which he alleged to have been written at Bristol by the poet-priest, Thomas Rowley, and others in the fifteenth century, and which were first collected by Thomas Tyrrwhitt in 1777.

As a matter of fact the poems, which are probably among the most original in the universe, were the unaided work of a Bristol lad, aged sixteen, and the quaint disguising jargon, which a credulous age accepted as English as she was written in the days of Lydgate, was the pure guess-work of this eighteenth-century child of wonder. This surprising young whelp, as Dr. Johnson called him, had inherited the childish Alfred's love for illuminations and missals, while at an earlier date than any known poet of our land, the nursing mother of earth's noblest singers, he had given outward and visible evidence of a fixed resolution to excel in the highest kinds of poetry. He hardly wrote anything that is quite first-rate, if we exclude possibly the *Excelent Balade of Charitie* and some of the stanzas in *Aella;* but the unique language that he invented to translate his verses into, the vein of patriotism and romance he managed to throw over the poems upon the raids on England by Danes and Normans, and the sudden flowering of undreamt-of beauties in the wilderness of his imaginative dialect, these things argue a rare originality and reveal the immaturity of an absolutely sincere poet. The prodigy of his boyish output and the pathos of his untimely end, when, having precipitated a breach with his master in 1770, he left Bristol for London and poured forth heterogeneous verse and prose for the London booksellers at the rate of about one shilling a page, until even this rate of payment was denied him, and starvation confronting the proud spirit, he locked himself into his Holborn garret, on August 24th, 1770, and was found next morning dead, a mere boy of seventeen and three-quarter years, poisoned with arsenic, to be buried three days later

in the paupers' pit of Shoe Lane Workhouse—could such circumstances as these fail to render his work more world-famous than his mere writings could ever have done? Their eloquence even more than that of his printed poems evoked the undying testimonies of Wordsworth and Shelley and Coleridge to the "sleepless soul that perished in his pride," the "half-blown flowret" sung by Keats, the "day-spring of modern romantic poetry" in the enthusiastic phrase of Rossetti, the hero of Alfred de Vigny's play, and of the exquisite and pathetic picture of Henry Wallis. The wildness of Chatterton's fantasy and the brave translunary pitch of his phrase cast its most powerful spell, however, upon the strange visionary genius of England's most fantastic, eerie, and unearthly bard—William Blake.

William Blake, poet, artist, mystic, and seer, was by far the most original of the reactionaries who preceded the Romantic Revival. Born only thirteen years after the death of Pope he was, amongst other things, the first writer of proven genius to hark back to Elizabethan influence. Because, however, he passed most of his life in a *milieu* of artists and engravers, and because his few readers—Southey and Wordsworth, for example—considered him insane, therefore he remained isolated, had no direct literary descendants, and did nothing to bring about, or to hasten, the Romantic Revival itself. Blake was of Irish extraction. According to latter-day notions, his formal education must have been rudimentary to a scandalous degree. We know, however, that Swedenborg was studied in the household, and we learn from Malkin's *A Father's Memoirs of his Child* that "the favourite studies of Mr. Blake's early days" were Shakespeare's and Ben Jonson's poems. He must also have read largely in the Bible, Shakespeare's plays, Spenser, Chatterton, and Ossian. At the age of twelve he was writing verse. How early he caught the spirit of Elizabethan lyricism and of Elizabethan

heroics is abundantly shown in the *Poetical Sketches* of 1783. James Blake did wisely by his sensitive, impulsive, visionary son. Though Tatham says that Blake's mother once beat him for asserting that he had seen Ezekiel sitting beneath a tree, he seems to have exercised his visionary faculties for the most part unmolested. He was no more than four years old when he saw "God put his forehead to the window," which, according to his wife, who afterwards repeated the tale to Tatham, "set him a-screaming." Later, in one of his long country walks, he saw angels in a tree. During the whole of his life the world of visions compassed him about.

On being taken to Ryland, the King's engraver, with a view to apprenticeship, Blake, then aged fourteen, made a prophecy which was fulfilled in a manner startling enough to shake the modern belief in the all-explanatory powers of coincidence. "The man's face looks as if he will live to be hanged," said the boy; and, twelve years later, Ryland was the last man to be hanged at Tyburn. Blake was finally apprenticed to Basire, an engraver whose firm and sound, if somewhat lifeless, work confirmed his liking for a severer art than was then in vogue. In 1778 he was, for a short time, a student under Moser in the Antique school of the Royal Academy. About 1780 he started work on his own account by engraving some of Stothard's early designs; and this year his picture, "The Death of Earl Godwin," was hung in the Royal Academy's first exhibition at Somerset House. Stothard introduced Blake to Flaxman, through whom he came to know Fuseli. For many years Flaxman remained his friend and admirer; Fuseli also. His epigrams against them are, it is true, more pointed than friendly. But the epigrams were jotted down in moments of anger, spurred by inappreciation and misunderstanding. The history of Blake's friendships is a record first of warm affection, then, apparently, of equally

warm quarrels and of only half-supported accusations on his part; but, if it be recollected that he lived in his art and imagination, that artistic opposition and spiritual misunderstanding were to him what assault and battery are to the generality of men—so that if a man's lack of sympathy interfered with his visions, he was prepared to call him villain or murderer—and, further, that he was at all times impatient of any compromise whatsoever, and vehement to defend the knowledge he had come by intuitively, then it is easy to understand that quarrels were almost inevitable, and to conclude that, however violent in expression, they were not really more blameworthy than the quarrels of other and less acutely sensitive men.

In 1784 Blake, with Parker, a fellow engraver, opened a printselling shop next door to his birthplace (28, Broad Street, Golden Square). The following year, Robert, Blake's favourite brother and pupil, died, and, giving up his share in the business, Blake moved to 28, Poland Street. Here one night the process by which he printed his works suggested itself to him, or, as he fancied, was revealed to him by Robert's spirit. The designs and text were drawn and written on metal plates with an acid-resisting varnish. After prolonged immersion in an acid bath, the parts so protected stood in relief and could be used like type, for printing in any one ground colour. Blake and his wife further coloured each copy by hand. In this way he produced books of peculiar beauty and, sometimes, of great splendour in colour; for though the colouring often diminishes the similitude to things as we see them, it almost invariably heightens the mystical effectiveness, and depicts all the more powerfully a Blakean *other-world,* none the less real in its emotional and spiritual—in its artistic—effect because all cannot see it as Blake did. By this method he produced his most exquisitely and purely lyrical book of poems, the *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and, shortly

afterwards, *The Book of Thel* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.*

In 1791 Blake met a republican company—Godwin, Priestley, Tom Paine, and others—at the weekly dinners of Johnson the bookseller, and was the only one of them all to sally forth into the street wearing the *bonnet rouge.* About this time also began an acquaintance which lasted thirty years with Thomas Butts, who, buying Blake's works sometimes at the rate of one a week, did more than anyone else to save him from destitution, and—what was more to the artist—"always left him altogether to his own judgment." Next year, after a move to Lambeth, Blake designed 537 illustrations to Young's *Night Thoughts* (only forty-seven were engraved), issued a book of designs, *The Gates of Paradise,* and published two prophetic books, *The Visions of the Daughters of Albion* and *America, a Prophecy.* He refused the post of drawing-master to the Royal Family, perferring to remain unfettered, and in 1794 produced the *Songs of Experience; Europe, a Prophecy;* and *The Book of Urizen, Part I.;* followed in 1795 by *The Song of Los* comprising *Africa* and *Asia,* and by *The Book of Ahania,* continuing the Urizen myth.

In 1800 Flaxman introduced Blake to William Hayley, the fatuous author of *The Triumphs of Temper,* and it was arranged that he should settle near Hayley, in a cottage at Felpham, on the coast not far from Bognor, there to engrave the illustrations for Hayley's *Life of Cowper.* For a time Blake was delighted. Later, however, Hayley's "genteel ignorance and polite disapprobation" irritated "gentle, visionary Blake." On the other hand, Hayley's lack of understanding, his interference and "affected loftiness," must have been deadly indeed to Blake's imaginative life, for he used afterwards to say: "The Visions were angry with me at Felpham."

Soon after his return to London, Blake issued the last of his prophetic books that he published—*Jerusalem, The Emanation of the Giant Albion,* and *Milton.* Unfortunately he was brought into contact, in 1805, with a dishonest print-jobber and publisher, by whom he was twice tricked. Lifelong poverty was threatening to become destitution when, in 1813, Blake made the acquaintance of John Linnell, the painter, through whom he came to know John Varley, an artist interested in occultism, and other young men who became little short of disciples. It was with Varley that he did the remarkable series of Scriptural portraits—"David," "Edward III.," "The man who built the pyramids," and about forty others. Varley would suggest a subject, and with a "There he is!" Blake would proceed to draw the vision that he saw, and sometimes would say: "I can't go on—it is gone," or "It has moved; the mouth has gone."

After a last move, in 1820, to 3, Fountain Court, Strand, Blake executed some woodcuts for Thornton's *Virgil's Pastorals,* and engraved for the Book of Job a series of prints which for sustained and subtle power are unrivalled among biblical illustrations. Towards the end of 1824 he mastered enough Italian to read the *Divina Commedia,* with a view to illustrating that also. But his health was failing. Though he did enough to show that he might yet have surpassed his Job, only seven of the Dante designs, nearly a hundred in number, and done, many of them, in bed, were engraved and published before his death. On August 12th, 1827, he sang, saw visions and was joyful; and he died calmly in the evening, being then in his seventieth year.

There has been much discussion as to whether Blake was, or was not, wholly sane, in the ordinary sense of the word. Seeing that an accurate definition of what exactly constitutes sanity has yet to be found, the discussion appears

to be a little indefinite, not to say futile. Blake saw visions. For many that will be enough. The opinion of his contemporaries seems to have been fairly evenly divided. Southey called him simply "this great but insane genius." Coleridge, after a visit, "talked finely about him." Wordsworth, with greater insight than Southey, said that Blake's poems were "undoubtedly the production of insane genius; but there is something in the madness of this man that interests me more than the sanity of Lord Byron or Walter Scott." Blake's personal friends, too, were divided in opinion.

According to the rules and regulations of *common* sense, he was certainly crazed. An examination of his work and philosophical dicta proves him to have been something more. Super-sanity is not insanity, neither will it trot between sanity and common sense. And super-sanity, inspiration, intuition—whatever it may be called—was certainly his. In his work he expressed his visions and intuitions; and his best work possesses to so extraordinary a degree the quality of artistic truth and beauty, appeals so powerfully to the inner self, and is, in short, so marked with genius, that, whether he was or was not "crazed" or "insane," in the ordinary sense of the words, hardly matters.

The prophetic books, which Blake seems to have considered his most important work, have been largely responsible for the imputation of madness. Written in long, rhymeless, more or less metrical lines, or in a poetic prose which resembles frequently the chant of Whitman, they probably owe their form to Blake's love of Ossian, and perhaps, in part, to Milton's remarks on verse in connection with *Paradise Lost*. The designs that surround and mingle with the text are less illustrations to it than accompaniments in the spirit of it. Like most of Blake's pictorial work, they

have a strange power, portraying not so much human beings subject to emotions as passions, emotions, and fears made incarnate. With two exceptions these books appear to be not far short of chaotic, their purple patches not over-easy to find. *The Book of Thel,* however, and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* are comparatively explicit. The theme of the former, so far as it can be analysed, is the transiency of life and the insignificance of the individual contrasted, in Blake's own way, with the oneness of the universe—pervading, rather than acute, emotions, expressed with a wonderful power of suggestion and a sheer beauty of sound that calls up the radiant sadness of a dreamland, that is yet not a dream; or the remote, yet not unreal, place where the light of sunrise rests upon the earth.

But if there is doubt as regards the merits of Blake's prophetic books, there can be none as regards his poems proper. Defective in rhyme, metre, and grammar they sometimes are; but even with their faults, how exquisite! The *Poetical Sketches,* "commenced in his twelfth, and occasionally resumed by the author till his twentieth year," show at once his effortless choice of phrase, and beauty of cadence; and contain the grandly harmonised lyrics, "I love the jocund dance," "How sweet I roamed from field to field," and "My silks and fine array." *To the Evening Star* and *To Morning* have an extraordinary felicity in diction and loveliness of metaphor; fragments of dramatic pieces are written in a blank verse which nearly approaches the Elizabethan, yet is individual in its directness and, so to speak, its whirling swiftness; while *The Mad Song,* with its largeness and varied stormy music, reminds one of clouds scudding across the moon.

In the *Songs of Innocence and Experience, shewing the two Contrary States of the Human Soul,* there are fewer

faults of technique, and Blake attains his highest as a poet pure and simple.

> And I made a rural pen,
> And I stained the water clear,
> And I wrote my happy songs,
> Every child may joy to hear,

he wrote in the Introduction to the *Songs of Innocence.* The poems which follow are indeed songs of innocence, child-poetry about the fields, and "Mercy, pity, peace, and love." Anything happier and more tenderly simple than *Infant Joy* can hardly be found anywhere.

Spring, The Blossom, Nurse's Song, and *The Echoing Green* are only less perfect. They sing themselves, and have a freshness like that of the songs of nature, of streams and of birds. The best of Blake's lyrics are unsurpassed. They have the spontaneity of Elizabethan songs—their frolicsomeness, clarity, and delicacy. They are like gems, each phrase a facet flashing light. A soaring genius Blake's might well be called; for, though his thought took the profundities of the universe for subject, he was able many times to effect that supreme lyrical transmutation whereby thought becomes not the burden but the wings.

[1] The truth about "Ossian" is probably told most nearly in J. S. Smart's *James Macpherson: An Episode in Literature* (1905). See also the sixpenny brochure on *Ossianic Literature* by David Nutt. The best editions of Chatterton are the Aldine (ed. Skeat, 1875) and Routledge's (2 vols., ed. D. Roberts, 1906), and of the *Rowley Poems* by R. Steele (1898). There are two excellent studies of the *Life,* one by Sir D. Wilson, the other, *A Story of the Year 1770,* enlarged as *Thomas Chatterton: A Biography,* by David Masson. There is an Austrian study by Helene Richter (1900). For the Ballad Revival, see F. J. Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1857-9), and the same, ed. Sargent and Kittredge, in 1 vol. (1904),* the *Percy Folio MS.*, ed. Hales and Child (1867), and

Sidgwick's *Ancient Ballads* (in progress). Of Blake there are editions by W. M. Rossetti (Aldine, 1857), Ellis and Yeats (3 vols., 1893),* and John Sampson (1905), also in the Muses' Library (Selections) and ed. Perugini (Little Library, 1901) and L. Housman (1893). The writers are indebted to Mr. Stephen Reynolds for much aid in this section, especially as regards William Blake; also to Mr. Davey for suggestions.

CHAPTER XIII

LATER SCOTS POETRY: ROBERT BURNS

"The rank of Burns is the very first of his art. . . . A man may be coarse and yet not vulgar, and the reverse. Burns is often coarse but never vulgar."—LORD BYRON.

"I conceived that the moral mind and genius of Scotland were more obliged to Burns than to all her other authors taken together. . . . He confirmed my former suspicion that the world was made for me as well as for Cæsar."—JOHN YOUNGER, shoemaker.

The ancestors of Burns—Watson's *Choice Collection*—Allan Ramsay—Robert Fergusson—Burns's Life and Achievement.

THE Renaissance and the Reformation between them dealt fatal blows at the old Scots of Dunbar and Henryson. Bitten by the desire of emulating the Scaligers and Casaubons, the scholars, the famous Latinists of Scotland neglected the vernacular for the same reason that More and Bacon did and wrote in Latin. Men of genius, like George Buchanan and James Melvill, wrote exclusively in a Latin which Dr. Johnson was perhaps the last man to read for pleasure. More serious was the general effect of the Reformation in inducing the best wits of Northern Britain to neglect pure literature for Presbyterian theology, and to anglicise their diction in order to widen the range of their lucubrations. The succession of James VI. to the English Crown, by sundering the old Scottish court, removed another powerful stimulus to national literature. The new court makers tuned their lays to harmonise with the strains of the south, the scholars wrote in Latin, the divines wrote divinity and diverged more and more from literary

models of any kind. The English Bible made its way into the remotest kirks, and no northern rival was found to resist it. Writers such as Drummond and Urquhart seldom relapse into the colloquial broad Scots. The removal of 1707, when the Scots Parliament migrated to Westminster, assisted the tendency to centralisation.

And so the vernacular dwindled and ran dry, and was used scarcely at all save in an incidental way by the writers of popular songs and ballads. As for Scots prose, it may be said to have deceased early in the seventeenth century and to have been entombed at Westminster with King Jamie in 1625.

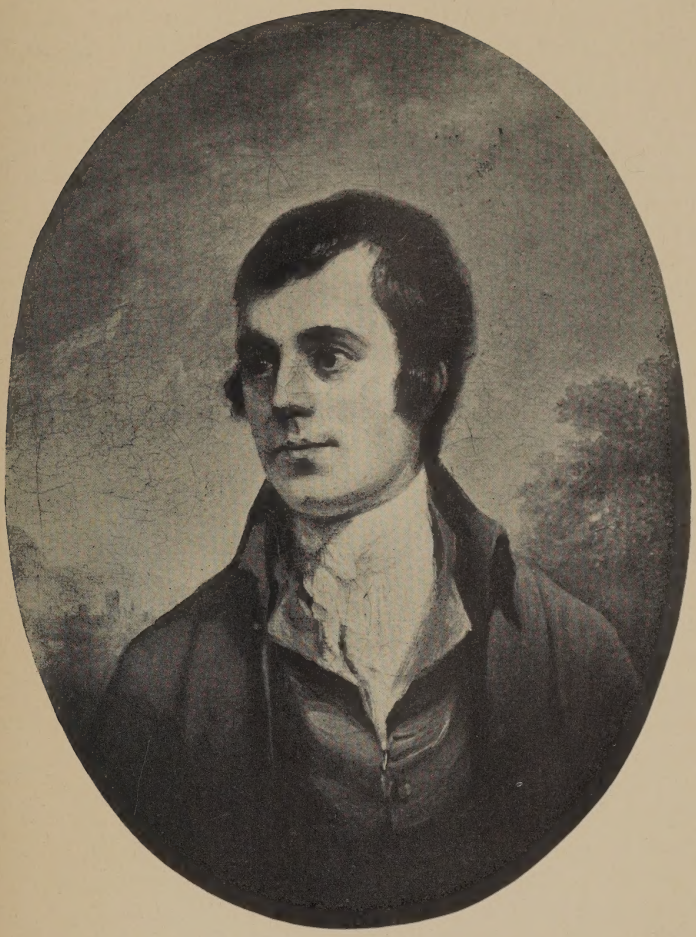
The great Scots authors of the first three quarters of the eighteenth century, such as Thomson, Smollett, Beattie, Kames, Hume, Adam Smith, and Robertson, all wrote excellent English. The great Dr. Blair was a species of diminutive Johnson.

Yet there was always in Scotland a strong feeling of antagonism—a strong reaction against this centralising and denationalising tendency. That a few shreds of the old national music and song were preserved and pressed into the service of this local sentiment was due largely to the lively legal element which survived the removal of the Parliament from Edinburgh, and to the cultivation of the fiddle among the poor classes as the one surviving weapon of offence against the all-conquering Kirk.

Watson's *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems* (1706-11) embodies one of the earliest collections made of this popular poetry which had resisted the onslaughts of the "meenester." William Hamilton of Gilbertfield, Allan Ramsay, Robert Ferguson are the names pre-eminently associated with the preservation of the old poetic tradition during the half century that preceded Burns.

Allan Ramsay (1686—1758), born on October 15th,

1686, in Crawford parish, in Lanarkshire, was roughly brought up and apprenticed by his step-father to a wig-maker in Edinburgh (1701). Shrewd and canny in every relation of life, he soon acquired a business of his own, married and, developing a literary vein, became laureate of a small Jacobite circle known as the Easy Club. About 1717 he launched out as a bookseller at the Mercury, in High Street, and became famous for his leaflet literature, mainly verselets of his own, or *réchauffés* of old Scots song and ballad. Whatever it was, Ramsay's last piece became generally in demand. Luckily for his fame, Allan was a great admirer of the early poetry of his native country. He did not study it historically or philologically as a modern scholar would, but he was an indefatigable burrower in old manuscripts, and he had a very good idea of both the spirit and the substance of the literature of the Royal era. Thus about 1716 he fastened on a droll poem of the fifteenth century (*Christis Kirk on the Green*) attributed to James I. in the Bannatyne MS., full of broad humour and rural cantrips, and supplemented it with a vigorous and rollicking second canto of his own. Three years later came his volume of *Scots Songs,* and in 1724 the first volume of a more copious and at the same time more recondite collection to which he gave the title of *The Evergreen.* About the same time commenced another collection, called *The Tea-Table Miscellany* containing with much old verse, a number of songs and other pieces (including *Lochaber no More*) by Ramsay himself, his friends the Hamiltons, and others. In 1725, while these miscellanies were still running, appeared his pastoral drama, *The Gentle Shepherd.* In 1726 he moved from High Street to a book-shop in the Luckenbooths which with its conspicuous heads of Drummond and Ben Jonson soon became the favourite haunt of wits and men of letters in the northern capital. In 1730 he gave to the



FROM THE PAINTING BY ALEXANDER NASMYTH

ROBERT BURNS

world *Fables,* and in 1737 *Scots Proverbs.* On January 7th, 1758, at the age of seventy-two, the Scots Theocritus died, full of fame, in a fine octagonal villa on the north slope of the Castle Hill, fifty-seven years having elapsed since he had come up a penniless boy from Lanarkshire. An admirable type of the long-headed Scot, eminently mundane and full of glee ("O for a spunk o' Allan's glee"[1]), with an overmastering relish for humour of the broader kind, but temperate and shrewd, with a strict eye to business, and with no disturbing passion or imagination, he was clearly a man born to thrive. His one bold experiment was his mixture of Scots and English, and his incorrigible fondness for dialect in defiance of the stolid anglicised taste of the day. But his countrymen came in time to appreciate his efforts to revitalise the vernacular, and it is this part of his work that best survives.

Ramsay, as we have seen, had a great respect for the literature of the Royal and Courtly Era,[2] but nearer his own time he found the metrical vehicle which suited his own talent and purpose best. Rob. Sempill of Beltrees, in Renfrewshire, had written a most amusing skit on Habby Simpson, a piper of Kilbarchan who made his living by "daidlin a bag o' wind" in the clachans of the west of Scotland. These diverting rhymes, which fitted the measure employed like a glove, became familiar to every Lowlander who fancied he could warble; and subsequently, when breathed into by Fergusson and Burns, the stave's celebrity became world-wide. The Sempill stanza was no new thing; it had been used by Dunbar, by Alexander Scott (d. 1584) and others, but had never been a great favourite with the old makers. Sempill inaugurated its modern use. It consisted of six lines, of which the first, second, third, and fifth contain each four iambics; the

[1] First Epistle to Lapraik.

[2] Described in Book I. chap. iv.

fourth and sixth lines two apiece—the long and short lines rhyming with each other respectively. This measure proved a rare affinity with the very genius of the Doric speech of North Britain. Allan writes to incite his "witty wanton Willy" Hamilton to exercise himself in the stave:

> Ye're never rugget, sham, nor kittle,
> But blyth and gabby,
> And hit the spirit to a tittle
> Of standard Habby.

Hamilton ("Gilbertfield") took it up, and in their hands, even before it was immortalised by Burns, it became the standard stave for good-humoured satire, Bacchanalian compliment, and epistolary gossip and chat-back.[1] Ramsay only used this stave in five or six semi-comic pieces, but his mastery of it may be judged from one stanza of his eulogy of Lucky Wood—

> She gaed as fait as a new preen
> An kept her housie snod and bien;
> Her peuthen glanc'd upon your een
> Like siller plate,
> She was a sonsie wife and clean
> Without debate.

Burns had already perfected his mastery of the stave when in May, 1785, he wrote that epistle to "coaxin' billie" Simson, in which, in that delightful spirit of generosity which wins him all our hearts, he recognises his debt to Ramsay and famous Fergusson:

[1] Wordsworth, Arnold, Kipling, Watson, and other masters have used it effectively, but the emphatic gutturals and broad vowelling of the Scottish tongue are needed to bring out its finest effects. See D. T. Holmes, *Lectures on Scottish Literature*, 1904, 42.

I gat your letter, winsome Willie;
Wi' grateful heart I thank you brawlie;
Tho' I maun say't, I wad be silly,
An' unco vain,
Should I believe, my coaxin' billie,
Your flatterin' strain.

My senses wad be in a creel
Should I but dare a hope to speel
Wi' Allan or wi' Gilbertfield
The braes o' fame;
Or Fergusson the writer-chiel,—
A deathless name.

As for Robert Fergusson, of whom his great successor wrote—

O Fergusson! thy glorious parts
Ill-suited law's dry, musty arts,
My curse upon your whunstane hearts
Ye Enbrugh gentry.
The tythe o' what ye waste at cartes
Wad stow'd his pantry—

it might almost be said of him that he was a premature, immature, and miniature edition of the greater Robin.[1]

As with Burns, his forte was the vernacular and the irregular stave; his style of treatment humorous, pathetic, and moralistic. What he lacked was Burns's male roguishness, his daring imagination, and powerful reaction against depressing conditions. Assailed by fate within and fate without, a poor lawyer's dismal drudge, possessing no reserve either of moral or of physical strength, lacking a

[1] In person he is described as of slender, handsome figure, his forehead high, his countenance open and pleasing, though somewhat effeminate and characterised by extreme pallor, but kindled into life by the animation of his large black eyes whenever he became interested in the conversation.

friend to stand by him in his hour of need, he sought to forget his poor home and his aching fingers in the noisy revelry of the club-house and tavern. Thus tending to dissipation he sank into broken health, then into remorse and religious melancholy, and finally passed to a swift and distressing end in a public lunatic asylum in Edinburgh. This was on October 16th, 1774. In 1787, during the heyday of his sojourn in Edinburgh, Burns sought out the grave in the Canongate cemetery and had Fergusson's name cut upon it at his own expense. The "writer-chiel" was not twenty-four when he died, and is therefore to be ranked with Chatterton and Keats, and Chènier and Lermontov, as one of the potentialities of literature.[1] Fer-

[1] At "nine years less than thirty, sweet one-an'-twenty." Fergusson began contributing pieces, both grave and humorous, in English and in vernacular, to *Ruddiman's Weekly Magazine*. Few are distinguished by any depth of poetic feeling, but the dialect pieces show graphic humour and a descriptive power rich with promise. He excelled in descriptive pieces, modelled on those of Swift and Gay, and in poetic epistles, garnished with strong pronunciations and in the Scottish metre:

> Could lavrocks, at the dawnin' day,
> Could linties, chirmin' frae the spray,
> Or toolin' burns that smoothly play
> Ow'r gowden bed,
> Compare wi' Birks o' Invermay?—
> But now they're dead.

He need have been in no anxiety about the songs of Scotia, which were, as we know, upon the point of being born again. His mantle was to fall upon the shoulders of a much greater man; as the mantle of such genial caricaturists and humourists as Surtees and Marryat fell upon the shoulders of a giant (Charles Dickens), so the mantle of Gilbertfield and Fergusson fell upon Robin Burns. The fable lay comparatively inert under the successors of Æsop until "Le Bonhomme" La Fontaine arose and vitalised it in every part.

gusson's immediate legacy to Burns was a score or so of admirable models, thus:

Fergusson.	Burns.
"Leith Races."	"Holy Fair."
"Mutual Complaint of Plainstanes and Causey."	"Brigs of Ayr."
"Farmer's Ingle."	"Cotter's Saturday Night."
"Auld Reekie."	"Edina, Scotia's darling seat."
"Hame Content."	"Twa Dogs."
"Elegy on Death of Scots Music."	"Elegy on Captain M. Henderson."

One can still read with a glow of genuine appreciation the elder poet's *Hallow Fair* and *Auld Reekie,* his *Epistles,* and his *Odes to the Dee and the Gowdspink,* or his delicately touched lines, *On Seeing a Butterfly in the Street* (compare Burns's *Mouse*).

The Burnes or Burness family had been yeomen on the estate of the Keiths of Kincardineshire for several generations previous to 1748, when William Burns left Clochnahill and came southward, settling at last as a small cultivator and jobbing gardener on a croft at Alloway, two miles south of Ayr. There in a small clay cottage or "biggin" the poet was born on January 25th, 1759. His father had a kindness for the old Jacobite traditions, his mother Agnes (Broun or Brown) for the antagonistic legends of persecuted hill folk and Whigamores; and Robert drew in nourishment from both sources of romantic sentiment. When he was seven, his father moved to a seventy-acre farm two miles farther south, at Mount Oliphant. This looked like prosperity, but the friendly landlord died, there was a hard factor, whose insolence (described in *The Twa Dogs*) was aggravated by the growth of debts, and consequent drudgery and physical

overwork for the farmer and his sons (the poet had a younger brother Gilbert). They were taught and taught well, however, by their father[1] and by William Murdoch, who was hired by the local farmers to serve a little school at Alloway; and there Robert became "an excellent English scholar," reading Addison and the *Life of Wallace,* Richardson's *Pamela,* and Stackhouse's *History of the Bible.* At sixteen, in spite of the hard grind of poverty and the "unceasing moil" of farm work, Robert's nature took a rapid development. To give his manners a brush, he went to a country dancing-school (thereby distressing his father), and it must have been about simultaneously that love and poetry began to interest him. Regularly on winter evenings, regardless of expense, a candle was lighted for reading and writing, and verses soon began to collect in a small drawer. The summer nights were spent in a far different fashion. Full-blooded and free-spoken, with lustrous eyes and wheedling tongue, Burns was perhaps the most amorous of British bards; he was as susceptible to petticoat influence as Coleridge or Keats and as dangerous as Shelley or Byron:

> There's ae wee faut, they whiles lay to me,
> I like the lasses—Gude forgie me.
> For monie a plack they wheedle frae me
> At dance or fair;
> May be some ither thing they gie me
> They weel can spare.

One of his earliest and most delightfully spontaneous effusions was his tender welcome to an illegitimate child, "wee image of my bonny Betty," and the misfortune he invoked if "Ever he blushed to hear such pledges of

[1]Arithmetic and religion were the subjects of instruction most congenial to William Burnes. To him they were equally exact sciences.

affection call him 'Tit-ta or daddy'" certainly never came to his call, for he remained the same "frontless" and thoughtless Robin (but never the cruel or heartless village Don Juan he has been represented) to the end of his brief career.

At Whitsun, 1777, the family moved from Mount Oliphant to Lochlie, a moorland farm near Tarbolton (eleven miles north-east). The poet had seen something of roystering companions in 1775 at Kirkoswald, where he went for a quarter to learn gauging and surveying. At Tarbolton in 1780 he entered a young farmer-bachelors' club, the chief object of which was, no doubt, to discuss the *fillettes* of the neighbourhood (the poet was always fond of a French tinge in his discourse); and next year he became a Freemason and learnt to fill his glass and mix without fear in a drunken squabble; but as all this was done on his wages of £7 a year allowed him by his father, no great harm can have been done. The same year, 1781, saw his first regular disappointment in love, for he was then jilted, or at any rate finally refused, by Alison Begbie, a farmer's daughter who was a servant near by, and in whose honour he wrote *The Lass of Cessnock Banks, Bonnie Peggy* and *Mary Morison,* the second stanza of which marked his high water as a poet until, while ploughing in 1782 (*æt.* 23), he composed *The Death of Poor Mailie.* After a futile attempt to set up as a flax-dresser at Irvine, Burns returned to the Lochlie farm in January, 1782. But he had greatly widened his circle of acquaintance at Irvine; he had mixed in the society of genial blackguards, and he had fallen in with the poems of Robert Fergusson, now dear to all who recognise in him the straggling genius who beckoned the fuller poet into his true field of national humorous song. In February, 1784, at the age of sixty-two, William Burnes died at Lochlie, prematurely worn out by his brave struggle with his barren holding. Next

month Robert and his brother Gilbert moved some twenty furlongs to a 118-acre farmstead at Mossgiel, near Mauchline, where Robin's finest pieces were written, 1785-6. Burns was now twenty-four years of age, and come to his full strength of limb, brain, and passion. As a young farmer on his own account, he mixed more freely than hitherto in the society of the countryside, and in a more independent fashion. He had the black eyes which Sir Walter saw afterwards in Edinburgh and remembered to have "glowed." He had wit, which convulsed the Masonic meetings, and a rough-and-ready sarcasm with which he flayed his foes. Besides all this, his companionship at Irvine had borne its fruits. He had become the father of an illegitimate child, had been rebuked for his transgression before the congregation, and had, in revenge, written witty and wicked verses on the reprimand and its occasion, to his correspondent Rankine. Ayrshire was at this period a sort of theological bear-garden. The most important clergymen of the district were divided into "New Lights" and "Auld Lights," they wrangled in Church courts, they wrote and harangued against each other; and, as the adherents of the one party or the other made up almost the entire population, and as in such disputes Scotchmen take an extraordinary interest, the country was set very prettily by the ears. The Auld Light divines were strict Calvinists, lay great stress on the doctrine of Justification by Faith, and inclined generally to exercise spiritual authority after a somewhat despotic fashion. The New Light divines were less dogmatic, less inclined to religious gloom and acerbity, and they possessed, on the whole, more literature and knowledge of the world. Burns became deeply interested in the theological warfare, and at once ranged himself on the liberal side. Smarting under the indignity of the penitent stool Burns pursued the Auld Light divines with implacable satire,

angry and fuming but never erratic, in *Holy Willie's Prayer, The Twa Herds, The Holy Fair,* and *The Ordination,* every line of which cut to the bone. It was the applause gained by these satires that made him realise his vocation—no longer as a country-side minstrel, but as the poet of his country. The national manners were once more in the hands of a national poet. His own manners, it is almost needless to state, were untransformed. Undeterred by any cutty stools from his amorous pursuit of the lasses, whom he frankly warns in verse against the advances of "Rob Mossgiel," a race-meeting and the humble dance or penny-pay wedding that followed proved to Burns the starting-point of a deeper passion. Jean Armour, daughter of a mason at Mauchline, inspired it. When the news came that she was with child the poet behaved at first like one distraught. His better nature, however, as was usual with him, asserted itself, and he sent her a letter of troth-plight, which might have served as the irregular equivalent of marriage under the Scots law, had not the girl's father, a dour, hard man of the Auld Light persuasion, destroyed it to show his deep-rooted dislike of the Burns connection. The poet was never more prolific than during this period of emotional storm and stress. *The Jolly Beggars, Lines to a Mouse, Cotter's Saturday Night, Halloween, Scotch Drink, Twa Dogs, The Vision, To the "Unco Guid," To a Mountain Daisy, A Dream,* and *The Brigs of Ayr* were all written between the autumn of 1785 and that of 1786. From this period also date his new regular signature:

> While Highlandmen hate tolls and taxes:
> While moorlan' herds like guid fat braxies;
> While *terra firma* on her axis
> Diurnal turns,
> Count on a friend, in faith an' practice,
> *In Robert Burns;*

and his fixed determination to leave Britain and its grudging soil and climate for a transatlantic home.

As a souvenir of his rhymes which so many friends had praised, he determined to bring out his poems (of the genuine worth of which he himself, at least, had a very shrewd idea) by subscription through a printer in Kilmarnock. He may have had an afterthought that something would "turn up" as the result of the provincial celebrity of which he felt already assured.

While his volume was passing through the Kilmarnock press (whence it issued at the close of July, 1786) the poet was casting about for some means of earning a livelihood less hard and obdurate than tilling the soil. He eventually arranged with a Dr. Dayles, of Port Antonio, Jamaica, to serve for a term of three years as overseer of the negro labourers on his plantation at a salary of £30. After some difficulty, he secured a passage on board the *Nancy,* which was to sail from the Clyde either in September or October. He was prepared to work his passage out, but the proceeds of the Kilmarnock volume (574 copies at 3*s.* apiece) amounted to £20, and promoted him to the steerage (£9 9*s.*). His chest was already on the way to Greenock, and he himself skulking inland to avoid an affiliation suit with which the Armours menaced him, when a letter was put into his hand from one of the "Enbrugh gentry" who had risen to an enthusiastic appreciation of his poetry, and advised the maker to appeal to the wider audience of the capital.

The poet's prolific period was now over. The turning-point of his life had come. The sweet period of aristocratic recognition had arrived, in the course of which Burns (just arrived at the age of twenty-eight) was to be put to the test and tried beyond his strength. No one could have asserted with completer success or triumph than he did among the "Enbrugh gentry" (who were in general,

says Carlyle urbanely, more noted for clearness of head than for warmth of heart) the dignity of native genius.[1] But the very knowledge of the comprehensiveness of his own talent was a dangerous acquisition to Burns. He was no longer contented with the happy valley of his own inspired invention. He seems to lose his poetic innocence: and partly, at any rate, to forfeit his power of making all

[1] How vigorously this peasant of genius impressed the directing class of his day is conveyed to us in a passage of Lockhart, upon which it would be difficult to improve: "It needs no effort of imagination to conceive what the sensations of an isolated set of scholars (almost all either clergymen or professors) must have been in the presence of this big-boned, black-browed, brawny stranger, with his great flashing eyes, who, having forced his way among them from the plough-tail at a single stride, manifested in the whole strain of his bearing and conversation a most thorough conviction that in the society of the most eminent men of his nation he was exactly where he was entitled to be; hardly deigned to flatter them by exhibiting even an occasional symptom of being flattered by their notice; by turns calmly measured himself against the most cultivated understandings of his time in discussion; overpowered the *bon-mots* of the most celebrated convivialists with broad floods of merriment, impregnated with all the burning life of genius; astounded bosoms habitually enveloped in the thrice-piled folds of social reserve, by compelling them to tremble—nay, to tremble visibly—beneath the fearless touch of natural pathos; and all this without indicating the smallest willingness to be ranked among those professional ministers of excitement, who are content to be paid in money and smiles for doing what the spectators and auditors would be ashamed of doing in their own persons, even if they had the power of doing it; and last, and probably worst of all, who was known to be in the habit of enlivening societies which they would have scorned to approach, still more frequently than their own with eloquence no less magnificent; with wit in all likelihood still more daring; often enough, as the superiors whom he fronted without alarm might have guessed from the beginning, and had ere long no occasion to guess, with wit pointed at themselves."

subjects, however humble, profoundly interesting.[1] A certain incompatibility creeps into his life; his mind grows at variance with itself—the divinity of his rustic, pagan Muse is no longer sacred in his eyes.

The first Edinburgh Edition of the Poems appeared about April 15th, 1787, and was twice reprinted that year. On the proceeds of the first batch of subscriptions the poet made a leisurely pilgrimage through Caledonia. He set out on a Border excursion in May; in June he rambled among the western Highlands; in August he perambulated the northern Highlands; and in October he made a final tour in the Ochils. Early in 1788 took place his amorous correspondence with Clarinda (Mrs. McLehose).[2] The dilatoriness of his publisher, Creech, was perhaps the prime cause of his lingering about in Edinburgh all this winter. It was not until March, 1788, that their accounts were squared and that Burns tore himself away from the fascinations of Clarinda and the flatteries of his toping and other "Enbrugh cronies." In August, 1788, he was legally married to Jean Armour at the Kirk session of Mauchline, and, in December, the married pair ("I hae a wife o' my ain") began their home life together at Ellieslands, a small farm six miles up the Nith from Dumfries, which was leased from Patrick Millar, of Dalswinton. The "golden days" of Ellieslands were not destined, unfortunately, to be protracted. Burns would never have made a successful nigger-driver. The numerous distractions caused by curious visitors, the "fashionable danglers after literature," and by the duties which he assumed as a gauger in November, 1789, necessitated his reliance to some extent upon hired hands, of whose efficiency a neighbouring farmer gives a somewhat sceptical account.

[1] Preceding Wordsworth's theories on the subject of nearly a dozen years of successful practice.

[2] For whom in December, 1791, he wrote "Ae fond kiss."

"The lasses did nothing but bake bread, and the lads sat by the fireside and ate it warm with ale." At every carousal within fifty miles, Burns, who spent more and more of his time on horseback, was called in to be chairman, and we are hardly surprised to read of his desertion of the book for the bowl. The margin of profit on a small lowland farm was always calculated upon a very narrow basis, and although farming profits as a whole were mounting, the poet was not to share in the rise. From Ellisland, where he had written *Tam o' Shanter* ("the best day's work done in Scotland since Bannockburn"), and began those sweet warblings of Scottish song which he contributed to Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum* and afterwards to George Thomson's *Collection* (opening out with such masterly strains as *Of a' the Airts* and *Auld Lang Syne,* 1788; *John Anderson* and *Willie brew'd a peck o' maut,* 1789), after a last grand carousal Burns moved finally in November, 1791, to a small three-room house in Dumfries.

His salary as gauger was advanced to £70 and he seems to have had good chance of promotion, in spite of certain political petulancies and vivacities which it was charitable to call indiscreet. As an executive officer, however, he combined humour and kindliness with no lack of energy upon active service. On February 27th, 1792, Burns was despatched to watch an armed smuggler which had got into shallow water in the Solway Firth. He was left on guard while his superior officer went to Dumfries for some dragoons. While watching he composed the song:

> The de'il cam fiddling thro' the town,
> And danc'd awa wi' th' exciseman;
> And ilka wife cries "Auld Mahown,
> I wish you luck of the prize man!"

When the soldiers came he led them to the assault of

the lugger, and was first on board. Personages or incidents supplied the spark to his genius more often than mood or reverie, but the echo from an old song was most frequently of all the source of inspiration; and while he was at Dumfries, though the rate of production was less than at Mauchline, he wrote some of his finest songs, among them *Ae fond kiss, Ye banks and braes, O my luve's like a red, red rose, She is a winsome wee thing,* the splendid *For a' that,* and *Scots wha hae,* composed in riding across the wilds of Kenmure with a Mr. Syme, who, observing the poet's looks, forebore to speak—judiciously enough, for a man composing *Bruce's Address* might be unsafe to trifle with. He felt that he would be humiliated by writing these songs—many of them patriotic songs—to order for money, and consequently would not receive a penny-piece for any of them.

His salary enabled him to live in tolerable comfort, his income amounting to a little under £100 a year. In May, 1793, he moved to rather a better house in the town. But his indulgence in hard drinking, and the constant excitement of various kinds to which his life was now subject, began to tell upon his powerful frame. In January, 1796, he fell asleep in the open air after returning from a carouse at the Globe Tavern, and caught rheumatic fever; he rallied several times, but sank very rapidly in July, and died on July 21st, 1796, at the age of thirty-seven. He was buried on the 26th in St. Michael's kirkyard. His wife survived him forty years. "His true life began with his death; with the body passed all that was gross and impure; the clear spirit stood revealed, and soared at once to its accepted place among the fixed stars in the firmament of the rare immortals."

Incommensurate as his work is with his genius, Burns is undoubtedly one of our major poets. There were trage-

dies, among the poets who succeeded him, of attempts at expression thwarthed by adverse conditions, but of all these tragedies Burns's is the hardest. Brief, broken glimpses of a genius that could never show itself complete, his poems wanted all things for completeness; culture, leisure, sustained effort, nay, even length of life. Occasional, fragmentary, and unpremeditated as most of his pieces are, they bear the guinea-stamp of unmistakable genius—poetic genius of the strongest and most universal kind. The eye of Burns is almost terrible for its calm and cool insight. About his expression there is a laconic pith and racy vigour which strikes to the very marrow of the popular understanding. Burns had no school or college education, but he had by nature the strong nervous style of a Shakespeare, a Swift, or a Cobbett which enabled him to appeal to the very heart of his people. Poor folk spent their last shilling on the Kilmarnock volume; parents and guardians had to lock the poet up to prevent their young people "reading him on the Sabbath." Every poor man felt himself an inch or two taller, a little less of a cipher in the world's affair after reading *The Twa Dogs*, *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, or *Is there for honest poverty*. The masculinity of his wit, the open-handed candour of his utterance, the rash generosity of his whole nature make the personality of this peasant-bard (for he is no impersonal genius like Shakespeare) exceptionally near and dear to us. He seems to be able to speak so much plainer than a scholar can, without losing a scholar's precision, so unerring is his eye, so keen is his verbal dexterity. He does not ever *want* to muffle his meaning. He is not struck dumb by the displacement of a petticoat and the view of his Muse's leg, which he compares with that of his wife. He can talk glibly and quite shamelessly about a louse, or a delicious armful. It is not his func-

tion to look upon nature with a languorous and romantic eye: his glance is swift, correct, and almost photographic. Everyone is familiar with the strong yet melancholy face of the poet, his wonderful power of humorous tirade, his great personal strength, his masculine and convivial weaknesses, his extraordinary faculty of fascinating both men and women of every class and every order of intellect. Of every society he mingled in, this thick-set little diable of a man, with his coal-black eyes and hair—like Napoleon twenty and Dickens fifty years later—proved himself to be the unmistakable lord and master. He was genius all compact, a genius of the first order.

As to the relative shortcoming in his achievement, the right clue, we are convinced, was discovered by Carlyle. Burns is too great or too small a man to be satisfied with the limitations of the finite career that was possible to him. Like Shakespeare and Scott he wanted to serve both his Muse and Mammon, and he lacked the requisite binary apparatus. He was not content to remain an artist, a seer, the greatest poet of a provincial dialect. His insight into human nature franked him as a man of the world, and he could not be wholly content with the singing robes beyond which Wordsworth, Keats, and Tennyson had no earthly ambition. To a man of his wit and capacity was due, he felt, in the course of nature the full use of the cornucopia of enjoyment and experience. For this partially vitiated ambition, which must to some extent have impaired the single-minded freshness of his imagination, the Edinburgh visit seems, in some subtle but not wholly inexplicable manner, to have been largely responsible. Burns became a gambler with life. What is really wonderful is that between the throws of the dice he was able to leave us such animated perceptions, such brilliant glintings, such exquisite spontaneous flakes of the humorous and poetic elements in life and nature. Supreme

tho' he is in his own "little Valclusa Fountain" of song, unrivalled as he is in displaying his packman's budget of satirical mirth, Burns is, upon the whole, with Byron, the least specialised and concentrated of great poets; he fell short of the single eye of the true poetic faith. The contrariness of human life has seldom played tricks with a finer faculty. As it is, we have much to be positively grateful to him for; his roguish daring and sincerity, his just sense of human equality, his patriotism. A word or two may be said in particular about his love of the poor and his regret for the poverty of his upbringing and of his masterly (scientific rather than sentimental) sense of outdoor life and outdoor doings.

A most important characteristic of Burns is his love of the poor and popular freedom. For the abstract ideas of 1789 about which Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the chorus of English bards raved he showed little intelligent sense and less fervour. He cared but little for the lofty ideals of fraternity and social regeneration, and understood less. But with the popular side of the great upheaval he was, heart and soul, sympathetic. He believed in equality of opportunity and in revolt against existing unfairness wherever the weakness of the oppressor might render it feasible. Of the divine right or eternal merit of the system under which the poor man sweats to put money into the rich man's pocket and fights to keep it there, and is despised in proportion to the amount of his perspiration, he had a low opinion. Of funded wealth in the shape of rank and fashion he had an uneasy dislike and suspicion. Both by nature and condition he was an insurgent, a hater of social distinction and of the rich. He regarded the well-to-do largely as do-nothings, for whose futile luxury he expressed in *The Twa Dogs* his hearty contempt:

A country fellow at the pleugh,
His acres till'd, he's right eneugh;
A country lassie at her wheel,
Her dizzens done, she's unco weel;
But gentlemen, an' ladies warst,
Wi' ev'ndown want o' wark are curst.
They loiter, lounging, lank, and lazy;
The deil haet ails 'em, yet uneasy:
Their days insipid, dull and tasteless;
Their nights unquiet, lang, an' restless:
And e'en their sports, their balls, an' races,
Their galloping thro' public places;
There's sic parade, sic pomp an' art
The joy can scarcely reach the heart.

In his easy description to his friend Thomson in January, 1795, of the verses beginning "Is there for honest poverty" as a mere "bagatelle," we discern the attempt of genius to disguise the intensity of conviction conveyed in the famous lines:

Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
Wha struts, and stares, and a' that,
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof for a' that;
For a' that, and a' that,
His riband, star, and a' that,
The man of independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that.

A king can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Guid faith, he mauna fa' that;
For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that.
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
Are higher rank than a' that!

The sentiment, expressed with all the epigrammatic neatness of Pope in the couplet,

> Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow;
> The rest is all but leather or prunella,

assumes in Burns likewise[1] a thoroughly characteristic form, in this generous and heartfelt outburst against the rising tide of subservience to wealth, ancient or modern.

Another very distinctive feature of Burns as a poet is not so much his love of nature and animals as the genuine animation of his pictures of outdoor doings—the keen and sparkling impressionism of his homely yet vivid touches of rural life. He is the poet of things seen and shared in, and he represents the busy life of the fields in verse as Blackmore, in his inspired moments, has depicted it. A busy place is assigned to animals, for the still life of nature is little to his taste. Compare his animated picture of autumn-time in *The Brigs of Ayr* with Keat's inspired rhapsody, *To Autumn*. The brisk air of country life pervades the one; the other is a dream of beauty and regret. As in Tolstoi's famous description of a day's reaping, so there are vivid touches abounding in Burns which sum up an infinite amount of generalised experience. Such are his descriptions of harvesters and gleaners, or of the gardener shouldering his spade to work in the purple May morning. He has expressed with conscious power and precision that which thousands of men who labour and delve the earth have felt obscurely and confusedly for centuries past. Contrast his ploughman with Thomson's, his woodman with Cowper's, his blacksmith with Longfellow's, and we realise how distinct his intimate knowledge is from the sympathetic imagination of the enlightened

[1] Both here and in the *Saturday Night*—"an honest man's the noblest work of God."

and cultured *bourgeois*. Beautiful though the reapers' scene in *The Seasons* is, one realises once and for all after reading Burns that Jemmy Thomson never straddled for ten hours a day for a month in a harvest-field carrying forward his ridge.

Of abstract sentiment for nature Burns had little, nor was he in the full sense of the word, like Wordsworth, or Keats, or Tennyson, a poet of nature. He had little or none of that divining power wherewith the genius of a spot is ascertained, and its moral influence gauged. Shelley, with his extraordinary, intense, and penetrative imagination, reveals with an intimate swoop the very psychology of nature. In Tennyson's *In Memoriam* a philosophy of nature is somehow interpenetrated by the mystical feeling of confidence that underlies the poem as a whole. Wordsworth walks through nature as if he were in a cathedral, where religious ceremonies are to be seen, of which he cannot indeed penetrate the full meaning, but of which the solemn character calms his spirit and profoundly affects his whole moral nature. With Burns it was utterly different. Nature had not the same mystic balm for him. He was comparatively indifferent or impervious to its healing power. The interpretation of nature's subtler moods and phases was to him no sacred task. Nature was to him, as to Romney or Gainsborough, primarily material for an effective background, to be powerfully if summarily stippled into the portrait group, rather than, as to a Turner or a Ruskin, a theme for independent poetic treatment. Magician as he was, of the calibre of Gerard Dou in his mastery of candlelight effects, he often dispensed with the adjunct of background altogether. He was not, in short, occupied by nature for its own sake. It is this indifference to the religion of nature that distinguishes him most from the poets of Wordsworth's century; but he also stands apart from them in that he is rarely meditative,

still less metaphysical or religious, and wholly ignorant of the pathways of philosophic doubt.

The attempts of middle-class critics to remodel Burns in their own image can never be attended with success. Noble, impulsive, improvident, his virtues and vices alike were just the opposite of those of the tradesman class. A regret may have lurked behind the poet's contemptuous astonishment at the wonderful self-restraint of the great middle class.

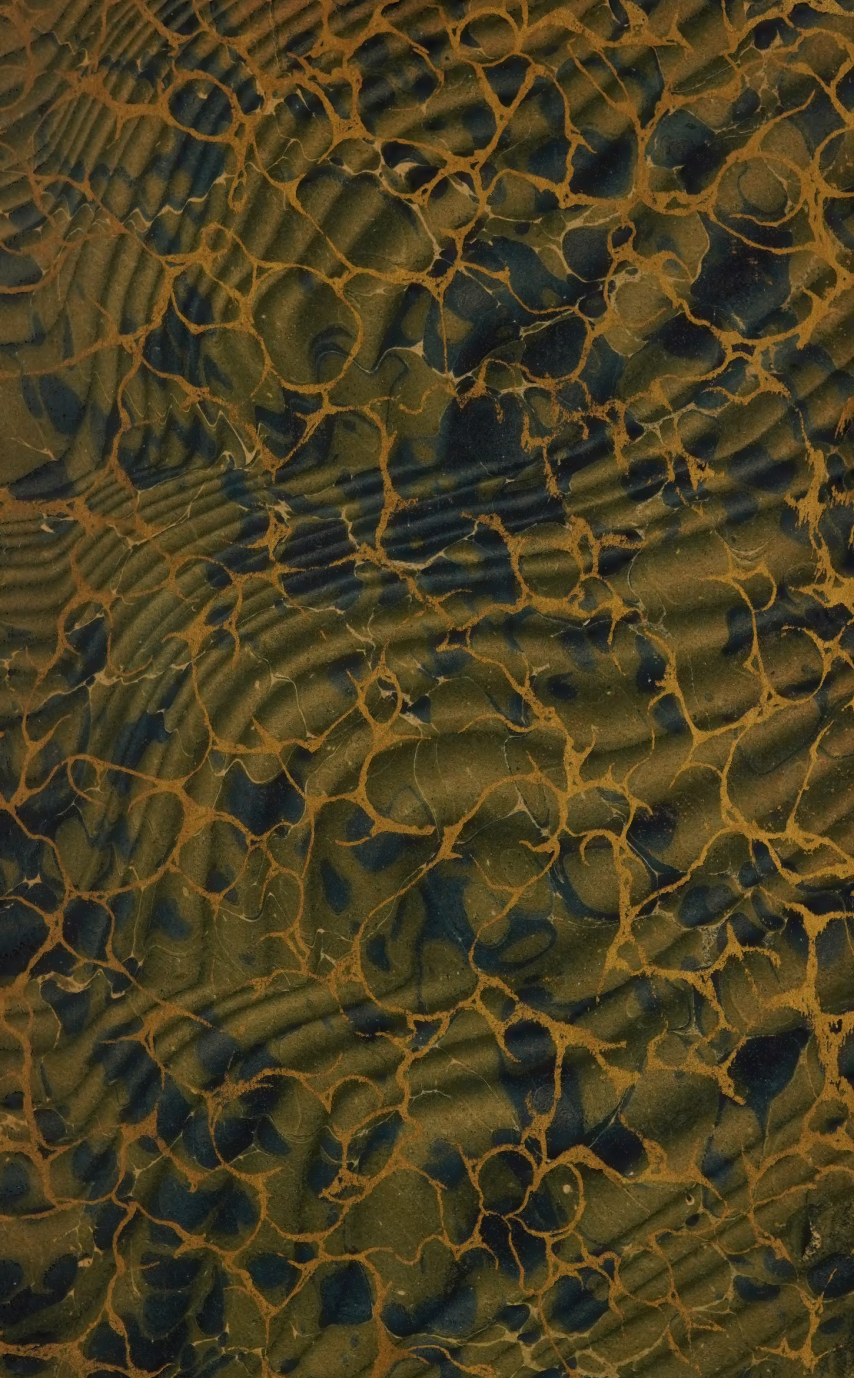
> O ye douce folk that live by rule,
> Brave, tideless-blooded, calm and cool,
> Compar'd wi' you—O fool! fool! fool!
> How much unlike!
> Your hearts are just a standing pool,
> Your lives a dyke!

But could such an insurgent genius as Burns have existed amid the dams and the drains, the prim barriers, the rectangular flats, and middle levels of such a fenland of the emotions? The answer is as frank and inevitable as the poet's verse. Sworn foe to sobriety and to prose of every kind, nothing shall stop the flow of his rhyme.

> The rising moon began to glow'r,
> The distant Cumnock hills out-owre,
> To count her horns wi' all my pow'r
> I set mysel';
> But whether she had three or four
> I cou'd na tell.
>
> . . . . .
>
> An anxious e'e I never throws
> Behint my lug, or by my nose;
> I jouk beneath Misfortune's blows
> As weel's I may;
> Sworn foe to Sorrow, Care, and Prose,
> I rhyme away.

A fig for those by law protected,
Liberty's a glorious feast;
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

The most celebrated editions of Burns's *Poems* are the Kilmarnock (1786), Edinburgh (1787), London (1787), Edinburgh and London (1793), Alex. Smith's (1883), Aldine (3 vols., 1893), and Centenary * (1896); of the *Poems, Life and Letters*, Currie's (1800), Allan Cunningham's (1834), W. Scott Douglas's (1882), Chambers and Wallace's * (1896). The best biographies are Lockhart's (1828) and the French Life by Auguste Angellier (2 vols., 1893). Among the more notable essays are those by John Wilson, Carlyle, R. L. Stevenson, Lord Rosebery, and J. M. Robertson. There is a *Burns Primer* by Craigie (1896) and an *Outline Bibliography* by Angus (1899). See also Henderson's *Scottish Vernacular Literature* (1898), Veitch's *Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry* (1887), Hugh Walker's *Three Centuries of Scottish Literature* (1893), and J. S. Blackie's *Scottish Song* (1889).



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